



ADVENTURES  
OF A LION  
FAMILY

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Before Sunrise.

See p. 32.



# The Adventures of a Lion Family

AND OTHER

Studies of Wild Life in East Africa

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE AFRIKAANS BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS*

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## A WORD TO THE READER

THE writer of these tales of wild animal life ; of the vast untrodden parts of South-Eastern Africa—the home of the big game ; the open plains, the bush ; the swamps, lagoons, and rivers ; the mountains and the awesome silent forest—is one of the few endowed with the real temperament to whom the accident of opportunity has opened the door to this wonderland of Nature. This young Dutch South African, still in the early twenties, spent his boyhood in these parts and absorbed the spirit of the land and its meaning as those may do who grow with the life not only in the country, but of it.

These tales were written for the interest of a small circle ; written just as they had been told among friends in his own home and homely language—known in South Africa as Afrikaans. It is not the Dutch of Holland. It is not a language of the world. It has been called the Taal, a dialect, or a patois. It has no literature of its own ; and only recently have its earnest advocates agreed upon

essential rules, or even claimed for it a separate existence—an individuality and recognisable form of its own. But in South Africa it is a real language, beloved of those who speak it ; it is part of themselves, of their honest self-respect, their honourable pride as a people. And if there should remain a doubt that it can express what the eye may see, what the mind may conceive, what the heart may feel—well, this little book will go a long way to have that doubt removed.

English is not the language of the author's thoughts, nor even that of daily use ; and when friends, desirous that a wider circle might enjoy the work of this young South African, pressed for publication of the book in English, the translation was entrusted to others who have interpreted it with sympathy and understanding. But it is not in the literary qualities of the work, whether in original or translation, that its appealing qualities will be found. It is because this is the real thing !

According to the view of the reader, it may be a high compliment or a contemptuous dismissal to label such a production as a work of imagination ; and those who are competent to decide are too few in numbers to make much difference by offering their tribute to the faithfulness of the picture. The fact seems to be that without imagination no such picture can be presented. But then it is not the



imagination of invention; it is simply that quality of mind or heart which enables one to see things from another's point of view. The self-effacement of the author—his sheer inability to see himself in the picture at all—may lend colour to the idea that these are not the results of his own observation and experience; rather that they are plausible, perhaps even convincing, but none the less imaginary; that a kindly sentimentalism has invested these animals—the lions, elephants, rhinos and hippos, the solitary haartebeest bull, the old boar, the Kolobos monkeys—with qualities and feelings that are human, too human! Wonderful and glorious books have been written—the works of genius, and may they live for ever—in which animals have become human and humans animal. They are not true to life, but what matter? They are true to themselves, as fairy tales are true, and with a more substantial basis! We love them; they are the classics of childhood. And yet the child within us will never fail to ask of any story the one question, “Is it a true story?” and if it is, it passes safely into the special sanctuary of the mind where rest unquestioned and unquestionable the lay Bibles of our youth. So when an author, however unpretentious, tells a true story and in his simple-minded way gives it forth as that, no compliment to his imagination or his skill will touch him if you deny his humble

claim to be a mere recorder of the simple truth. It will chill him—perhaps even rankle—that you have missed all that was really worth while. Foolish? Perhaps; but true! And that is the excuse for this gratuitous and unconventional note!

Intimate personal experience, close and absorbing observation, and unfailing sympathy and understanding permeate this little book. Is there any need to say that the stories are true to life? Surely not! But this much may be said, that no matter how fascinating or how convincingly true they may appear to the reader who has no personal experience to guide his judgment, it will be those who “have been there before” whose eyes will brighten and pulses quicken as they recognise the intimate details that make up the picture of the big game at home.

For, reader, you will not gather from the text that when the old lions circumspectly prowled round the dead rhino the author was within a few feet of where they passed in the donga below; he could have hit one with those paper pellets we used to use at school—wads fired from elastic bands; that when the lion cubs were full-fed and wanting to play he could have touched one with his rifle; that the baby hippo slipped through his hands like a greased pig, and, panicking, tossed him into the water; that for many days he spooed and watched and lay in wait for the lion cubs, a match

of wits and skill, trying to catch them, and failing ! If in places you should think that he has endowed these animals with human feelings and human intelligence—thoughts, memories, emotions—no one can argue you out of such belief, for no positive proof is obtainable ! But remember that these things are not lightly jotted down ; they are his convictions. They may be his interpretations, but—and it is a great big “ but ”—he actually witnessed the things which are described as facts, and the error, if error there be, cannot affect the facts—only the inferences drawn from them by one who observed closely, and whose sympathy and understanding are the life breath of his narrative.

Great books have been written about the big game of Africa ; but this little volume seems to me to be unique in that it tells of the home life of the big game from a point of view which is not that of the hunter—just their own.

J. PERCY FITZPATRICK.





## FOREWORD

IMAGINATION plays no part in the following sketches of animal life. The writer has simply endeavoured to reproduce the habits and life of the wild creatures which he has learnt to know during the course of many a year. Among wild animals there also exists a kind of spiritual life which often fills the attentive observer with wonder. After a while it becomes possible for him to comprehend their sensations from their outward behaviour.

In the sketch, "The Two Friends," where the action proceeds for a long period and in changing scenes, the writer has incorporated various incidents in one tale ; yet in the smallest particular it rests upon observations that are absolutely true to Nature, and upon personal experiences.

In the "Adventures of a Lion Family" the occurrences—with the exception of parts of the last chapter—are written down almost literally as they happened.

The scenery in which the animals are depicted is in every detail drawn from Nature.

THE WRITER.



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# ADVENTURES OF A LION FAMILY



LOS ANGELES  
Exposition Park

The

# Adventures of a Lion Family

## CHAPTER I



WIDE and still lay the wilderness under the magic glow of the tropical sunset. A soft, rosy purple, which gradually deepened to a dark amethyst, flushed the bush-covered crowns of the Koueberg range and flooded all the surrounding plain. Light puffs of mist rose repeatedly, creeping towards the mountains. They caught the evening shimmer and changed for an instant into thin, transparent veils, through which the mountain glowed sombrely, and then were scattered and dispersed by the cool breeze that each evening sweeps across the lonely peaks.

Far below towards the north, between blue and lofty mountains rising dark and full of mystery through the heavy atmosphere, lay Lake Natron,

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glittering in the effulgence of the departing sun, that sank just behind it among the mountains. The water holes in the vast saltpetre marsh, only now made visible, changed into living masses of silver and gold, and stood out in vivid contrast with their dark surroundings. From here one could hardly perceive the blurred outlines of the black tufts of bush and high papyrus, those beloved hiding-places of so many wild creatures.

The dying sun spread an evanescent flush over the plain at the foot of the mountain. Further away dark shadows were already rapidly rising in the glades of thorn trees, which here and there crossed the plain stretching to the marsh.

Zebras and hartebeest came trailing to the drinking place to quench their thirst before they sought the open veld for the night. The water here was a tiny spring, which came from a kloof in the mountain, and after a short-lived career of about a hundred yards disappeared again into the earth. A strip of green grass away in the plain betrayed its further subterranean course.

Care-free, with nodding heads, the zebras passed by, for it was many a year since they had heard anything of man ; and it was still light enough for there to be little danger of lions. Nevertheless, not to be taken by surprise, they advanced against the evening breeze. They were well aware that the lion seldom hides near water—he is far too good a hunter for that—knowing that game always work up wind towards the water and would easily scent him, turn tail and drink at some other spot.

But it was on the return journey from the water that the greatest vigilance was necessary and precautions had to be taken against being ambushed.

Not very far from the water a broad *korongo*<sup>1</sup> coming from the mountains meandered over the plain. A stranger, seeing the stately trees with their heavy rounded crowns rising out of it and so sharply outlined against the bare, grassy plain, would conclude that a rapid stream must be running below. Descending the shallow banks of the *korongo* he might at some places have fancied that he had entered the primeval forest. Up there in the fold of the two mountains where the *korongo* has its origin, countless little runnels traverse the mountain slopes on either side and run into it ; indeed, in the rainy season their contributions sometimes for a few hours become a swift-running stream.

In one of these little sloots,<sup>2</sup> rankly overgrown with bushes and creepers stretching from bank to bank, in a pleasantly cool spot rested our family of lions.

Why were they here—high up under the mountain and not down in the shady *korongo* near the game and the water ? Because the lion feels safer here. He can survey from here a great part of the plain, and so can become aware in good time of approaching danger ; because the rhinoceros grazing in the *korongo* cannot disturb him ; and because he knows if man should come he always camps near the water. Although the lion exhibits

<sup>1</sup> Korongo = a wide, deep river-bed.

<sup>2</sup> Slood = a water-course.

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such surprising liveliness and energy during the night, there is nothing he hates more than to have his midday sleep broken.

There they lay on a ledge under an overhanging cliff, over which fell a curtain of creepers with little windows here and there opening on to a view of



From their hiding-place they had a view of part of the flats below.

the flats below and the far horizon—two powerful males already past their best years, two females still in their prime, and three little ones about six weeks old. The largest, a magnificently strong lion, whose mane of shaggy hair brushed his neck and forelegs and almost swept the ground, was already grizzled and had lost one of his huge fangs. He lay a little to one side and gazed with interest at the gambols of two of the cubs who were amusing



themselves like kittens. The third little cub also looked on, still sleepy but very interested. The other male, who had lost two fangs, was less awe-inspiring, as he had merely a black collar round his neck instead of the wild mane of his comrade. He was apparently still fast asleep ; so were the females who were lying at the back against the cliff.

Far below between the sombre mountains the last rays of the sun flickered over the marsh, then the glitter faded and the mountain masses rose black against the red afterglow. Maanhaar<sup>1</sup> threw his glance across the flats. He saw the sunset shimmering in the branches above him, and wondered if he should not wake his followers and begin the hunt. Last night they had had no luck, and he felt spurred on by the gnawing desire for food. Suddenly he pointed his ears. What was that ? A dull report from far away on the plain ! His eyes suddenly assumed a new expression ; the indifferent, half-sleepy attitude disappeared. Another shot ! This time he was not mistaken. He raised himself to a sitting posture, and an involuntary growl awakened the other lions. Kraagmannetjie,<sup>1</sup> he of the black collar, stretched out his powerful fore-paws in the sand and yawned. The mother of the little ones looked anxiously at her family, and flattened her ears as she observed Maanhaar's attitude, which clearly expressed danger.

For just as easily as we understand each other

<sup>1</sup> Maanhaar = the term by which the South African Dutch distinguish a heavily maned lion.

<sup>2</sup> Kraagmannetjie = a male lion with a collar.

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by expressing our thoughts in words, the animals understand each other by the expression of face and attitude.

A third shot ! And the echoes reverberating through the mountains conveyed a menacing warning. All the lions were now sitting up. They gazed inquiringly at each other, or peered out towards the edge of the plain. The youngsters followed with innocent faces the trend of events. But the experienced old lions knew only too well the meaning of that peculiarly sharp report ; they had discovered the close connection it has with man—the mysterious. Often when they had come face to face with these hated disturbers of their rest, piercing bullets would fall and send the sand spurting over them, or the shot would fly screaming past their ears. When at last one of these shots brought a sharp pain to the neck of the old leader, causing blood to flow from a wound, his astonishment and respect turned to hate and fear. Here at last was a foe whom he could not vanquish. A feeling of hatred and fury overwhelmed him. How should one deal with an enemy who stands hundreds of yards away and never stops sending those bullets whistling around one ? With grief and shame he had to beat a retreat and seek a hiding-place, and there lick his painful wound. When next morning, upon the return from the flats, one of his two mates had been mortally wounded, they left the neighbourhood and had come to this place. And now . . . !

The old leader rose to his feet ; he lowered his shaggy head to the earth and gave vent to his long

repressed hatred in a deep, penetrating, and long-sustained roar, which rolled among the mountains and died away far over the wild East African plain. As soon as he had finished, Kraagmannetjie took it up and he was followed by the two lionesses. The mountain and the *kranses*<sup>1</sup> gave answer. Well might the hunter feel a thrill of awe as he listened to the impressive concert.

When they had in this manner given vent to their feelings, old Maanhaar took the lead, sprang from the ledge, and walked along the slood to the *korongo*. The females followed him, then the cubs, while Kraagmannetjie formed the rear-guard. Down here in an open glade among the trees the lions, one by one, stretched themselves on the cool drift-sands. While their elders rolled over and over in the sand, the little ones played contentedly near-by. Then up and away ! noiselessly over the dry bed, which grew wider and shallower as it neared the plain.

A little lower down there, where a runnel, rough and uneven, joined the *korongo*, and where just now a low growl had followed like a faint echo the roars of the four lions, they met a young pair who a few days ago had taken up their abode there. Of this fact our lions were well aware, although until this evening they had not yet caught sight of the new arrivals : for yesterday as they returned from the flats they discovered for the first time the strangers' spoor ; and indeed only this morning they had heard the roaring of the two

<sup>1</sup> *Krans* = rocks crowning a ridge

lions. The discovery gave rise to a thought in Maanhaar's old head, which at this unexpected meeting instantly recurred : a young couple like this was exactly what he needed, for far too often lately he had found that his teeth were becoming blunt, and his old chum was in much the same case. Besides, of late his mate had had to look after the three youngsters and he for the most part had had to do without her help. So it would be a great advantage to welcome two such recruits to their company.

The young pair were just on the point of turning into the *korongo* when suddenly the little group of lions came upon them. The female sat down and her mate, a noble specimen with silver-grey mane, stood right in front of her in an attitude of annoyance; the ears half-flattened and the tuft of his tail, which gently twitched from side to side, betrayed his dissatisfaction. And he had good reason to be displeased, as the roars of the other lions had just chased away a splendid eland-cow which with her calf had been grazing along the mountain. And there had been such a fine chance of stalking her ! Now it would perhaps take him the whole night to get hold of something on the open plain.

Then up came old Maanhaar, black and over-awing in the twilight, advancing slowly over the sand towards the young lion. He was very much heavier in build, and the rough mane about his fore-quarters made an impression which did not fail in its effect upon the younger animal ; besides, his proud bearing revealed so much confidence in his own

strength that the youngster involuntarily calmed down. Long accustomed as he was to unlimited power in his hunting-grounds and the subjection of other lions, who from time to time hunted under



his leadership, the unfriendly attitude of the young lion seemed very strange and unexpected to old Maanhaar. Yet he wished to come to terms, and only a slightly arched back and tail showed that at any moment an outburst of wrath was imminent.

In the meantime the two females sat down to await the result of the meeting, and Kraagmannetjie,

accustomed to stand by his old comrade in everything, also came steadily nearer. The three little ones sat in a circle and gazed in astonishment from one to the other, wondering at all this serious ceremony. This was their first appearance in society.

Without looking one another straight in the eye, the two lions brushed past each other sniffing suspiciously ; and when Maanhaar turned back and again brushed against him, uttering a friendly " uuummpf," the young lion was won over. Kraagmannetjie went through the same performance, but just a little quicker, as Maanhaar was walking off ; and after the two ladies had also smelt at the newcomers the introductions were complete. No, not quite : the three little ones did not mean to miss their part of the proceedings, the investigations in their case being far more thorough and systematic ; and if the young pair had not become impatient, and if the other lions had not trotted off, this sniffing might have gone on all night. Their whole demeanour, while they sidled off to overtake the big lions, showed that the cubs were more pleased with themselves than with the newcomers and that they began to have an idea of what it meant to belong to such a group. Nine lions ! Indeed, a force not to be trifled with.

Under a great camel-thorn the old lion called a halt. Here lay the scattered bones of a giraffe they had killed only last week. The poor unfortunate creature had wandered too far into the undergrowth, and in broad daylight was run down here



by the four lions. The grass round about was still trodden flat. "What a feast we had here!" So thought our lions, while they sniffed round for a moment among the bones.

They went a little farther along the sand of the slood, then into the dusky shade of larger trees and bushes which now replaced the isolated trees and low scrub of the barer mountain slopes. There! Something rustled! and when Maanhaar got round a bend, there stood right in front of him two rhinoceroses in the high buffalo-grass. Well did our leader know the unpleasant temper of these forest giants; so he preferred to turn aside, and climbed the bank.

Before them lay the open veld, the wide valley stretching between low mountain-ridges right up to the lake, where everything was now enshrouded in dark shadows. Twilight changed to night; the moon was already up, but was hiding herself behind a bank of clouds on the horizon. A hundred yards along the bank they reached their usual path of egress, and Maanhaar wheeled round to the left towards the open plain. With tense ardour the others followed; the chase was about to begin in earnest.

On a small bare hillock not far from the slood stood a lonely hartebeest bull. He had already left off grazing and stared at our little troop of lions with an indifference which proved he had expected them. This was indeed not the first evening he had seen these ghostly figures gliding by like shadows towards the flats. It had become a rule



with him after sundown to watch for their coming. The lions on their side did not take much notice of him. They had long since realised the impossibility of taking him by surprise, as every evening he took up exactly the same position—for an old bull like this, of whatever species, is attached to one spot.

In the direction of the spring the whinnying of zebras was heard, and naturally the old *voorloper*<sup>1</sup> turned towards it ; but first he trotted to the right, then made a great detour so as to approach against the wind. With lions this procedure is a matter of course.

Suddenly the moon appeared and flooded the plain with a wave of magic light. Black stems of spreading thorn-trees came more sharply to view, and everywhere shapes became visible, which might be ant-hills or little bushes, but possibly game, and so merited all the attention the lions devoted to them. A startled buck would by its flight warn the other game and this would very much lessen their chance of success. Indeed, in this open country old Maanhaar would have preferred to have seen the moon rise a bit later this evening.

Even before they got so far as to scent the quarry, the lions became aware of a numerous troop of zebras on the strip of green grass right at the lower end of the water. Crouching as much as possible in the shadow of the isolated thorn-trees, the lions crept nearer and nearer until about a hundred yards from the game. For a wonder they

<sup>1</sup> Voorloper = leader.

had so far not put up any other creature ; and so the zebras continued to graze, thoroughly enjoying the tender little green blades, and, being placed still more at ease by the friendly moonlight, they were less on the alert than usual.

Here in the shadow of a great thorn-tree old Maanhaar came to a halt and looked around undecidedly. The position was difficult : there was nothing under which to take cover, the grass was short, and the moon shone down upon them from an entirely cloudless sky. He looked at Kraagmannetjie as though he would say : " What now ? "

But he also seemed unable to suggest anything and had already sat down, gazing at the game with longing eyes.

The two elders could not help thinking with some longing of their former hunting-ground. How easily it had always gone there ! A broad morass with standing water, at which all the game came to drink, an acacia thicket at one side, where one could find plenty of excellent hiding-places, and farther a long open veld with low, grassy knolls here and there. To reach the water the game was compelled to pass through the high grass ; and even if they did always remember to have sentinels in the rear, it seldom happened that they could escape without loss from the circle which the four lions quickly and unnoticed drew around them.

At last the plan was made. Quietly Maanhaar and the young pair doubled back on their tracks. The other lions understood ; these were old tactics. He meant to run round and make an attempt from

the other side ; if he were unsuccessful the zebras would most likely flee in this direction, where Kraagmannetjie and the two lionesses could then spring upon them.

The little cubs took this chance to have a drink while the lioness was resting, but when, during their jostling for the best place, one of them gave vent to a growl, he received a good hard slap from his mother. . Even little lions have their lessons to learn, and our trio must understand that they are not the only ones who are hungry to-night ! But a few weeks more and the instincts of a beast of prey will be stronger, and then it will no longer be necessary to remind them that there must be no noise while hunting.

Gradually all grew quiet. Peacefully the zebras were grazing in the moonlight, as yet unaware of their dangerous enemies. Maanhaar had stealthily crept back until he stood almost right opposite the other lions with the zebras in between. Farther he dared not go, or they would get the scent. About twenty yards from the nearest zebra was a large ant-hill. "Will he be able to reach it unseen and from there rush his prey?" That chance seemed very poor ; all the more because an old wildebeest-bull, coming from the water, having planned to pass the night with the zebras, suddenly stopped, as if turned to stone, with his face rigidly set in this direction. He must have noticed something—the old lion could see that, and knew that this was not the time to hesitate. He stole warily nearer. The young pair remained lying behind a

small bush. They realised that here their presence would only hinder things and reduce the chances ; also they already began to feel great respect for their old leader. Without sound or sign they had understood his plan.

Passing like a shadow over the ground the old lion had already reduced by half the distance to the ant-hill—when there, right in front of him, up flew two kiewitjes,<sup>1</sup> screeching ! The zebras took fright, the lion dropped to the earth—a zebra trotted to one side—got to windward—one snort—there they went, right towards the other lions !

In tense expectation the three lions awaited with convulsively trembling limbs the onrush of the zebras. But in vain. At twenty yards the troop stampeded past in full flight. “To let them run by like that without daring an attempt ?” Kraagmannetjie relaxed his powerful muscles, dashed after them, and with a couple of enormous springs got just behind a zebra. But they had already become aware of him and swung round to the left in utter confusion. For twenty or thirty yards Kraagmannetjie followed closely at the heels of the frightened animals, but never got a chance to spring.

With a few abrupt, threatening growls he gave up the chase and looked shamefacedly at the flying forms. In his excitement and desire he had allowed himself to forget his dignity as a lion so far as actually to run after game—and in vain ! Convulsively he lashed the tuft of his tail from side to

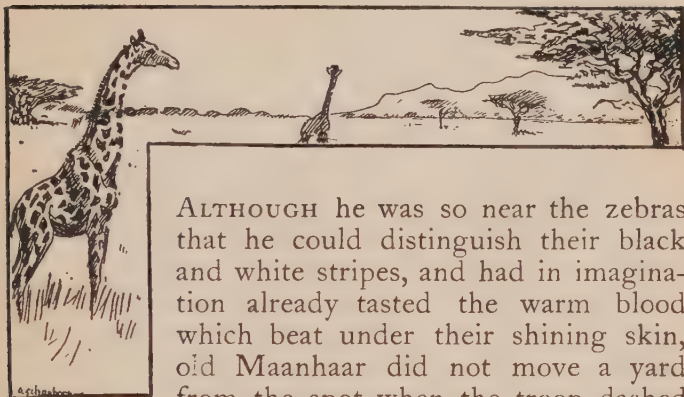
<sup>1</sup> Kiewitjes = plovers.

side ; then gave vent to an angry growl—" arruau "—and walked slowly back.

And far away over the moonlit plain snorted and neighed a boisterous troop of zebras, galloping against the evening breeze.



## CHAPTER II



ALTHOUGH he was so near the zebras that he could distinguish their black and white stripes, and had in imagination already tasted the warm blood which beat under their shining skin, old Maanhaar did not move a yard from the spot when the troop dashed

off. The experienced old leader had but very seldom so far forgotten himself as to give chase to game that had been alarmed and only then when his temper had been tried too far by repeated failures. In his young days even he, like every other young lion, had sometimes succumbed to over-excitement, which in nine cases out of ten resulted in disgraceful failure and always brought him to the same conclusion : to remain calm and to await his chance ; at the same time he was not as quick and agile as of old. More and more had experience taught him to rely upon cunning deliberation and his exact knowledge of wild animals and their habits. The skeletons which here lay all over the place bore witness to the high perfection of his hunting craft, for some of them lay in the most exposed spots, where a surprise seemed well-nigh impossible.



He had observed Kraagmannetjie's attempt with great interest ; his old friend would not rush about like this without good reason. In his eagerness to see the result he sprang up, and his example was immediately followed by the young couple that with tense eyes watched Kraagmannetjie's movements. With jaws half open, flattened ears, and rigid bodies, it seemed as if they would hasten Kraagmannetjie's decisive leap upon the back of the prey he was pursuing. But the zebra glided away from his pursuer, and disappointedly the three lions strode back to the others, over the ground where a moment before the zebras had been grazing, and where their scent still lingered, provokingly strong. Kraagmannetjie also returned. When the two old fellows met, the only sign exchanged between them was a dull growl from closed jaws.

Altogether this failure had sharpened their appetites ; they felt that at all costs they must get food to-night. Well then, farther on to the plains ; and so, off at a trot !

The ghostly silence with which every movement was accompanied as the grim figures now turned to take another direction, was far more fraught with foreboding than the impressive announcement of their exit from their hiding-place up there in the dark mountain-pass. An old hyena, that regularly every night followed their spoor, was unexpectedly chosen as scapegoat by one of the lions. His disappointment at the failure of the attack on the zebras was not less great than that of the lions themselves, and for a moment

dissatisfaction so rooted him to the spot that he forgot to maintain his usual respectful distance. One of the older lionesses, already quite near him, would as he thought go by behind her companions : but, when suddenly springing sideways with a fierce growl she pounced upon him, his fright was so great that he could only utter a stifled cry ere he tumbled head over heels into a clump of bushes ; and for quite awhile he was so short-winded that the lions could hear him coughing.

When a little farther on they passed over a *laagte*<sup>1</sup> and came upon the fresh spoor of wildebeest, the lions noticed to the left eleven giraffes on the top of a rise in the midst of an open space, where here and there a single thorn-tree raised its thin black stem and sombre crown. They were coming from the water in search of safe grazing, and had bidden farewell for the night to the ragged acacias which grew in clusters in the neighbourhood of the spring. Seen from the *laagte*, the dark shapes moved like silhouettes high against the moonlit sky.

The experienced old lions saw that it would be waste of time to attempt an attack, and continued to follow the spoor of the wildebeest. More than once, and in much more rugged and favourable veld, they had found it difficult to get hold of these astonishingly sharp-witted creatures. The young lion, however, thought differently. The immediate proximity of the giraffes whetted his desire more than the hope of getting the wildebeest. While

<sup>1</sup> Laagte = small valley.

the other lions trotted further on, the young couple remained behind, and after a bit they began cautiously to get in front of the giraffes—all the time remaining in the *laagte*.

Their plan was good, but the young lion had devoted too much attention to the giraffes, and had not sufficiently spied out the land. They had almost reached the spot where the giraffes must cross the *laagte* and where a little rain-sloot was favourable to an ambush, when suddenly two gazelles, uttering snorts of alarm, lightly sprang over the veld past the giraffes. With a smothered groan the lions lay flat down. Motionless stood the giraffes—the nearest one like a statue against the sky.

Ten minutes pass, fifteen, half an hour, and yet there is no change in the situation. The foremost giraffe merely turned his head, just for a moment, as the howl of a hyena suddenly and clearly broke the silence. At last the old “woolf,” entirely recovered from his fright, had gathered enough courage to “boo” from far away. The two lions found the situation unbearable. Must they lie here the whole night under the watchful eye of the giraffes, who hindered their every movement? Before the young lion could make up his mind whether he should follow the other lions or remain longer, lying here until the animals were at ease again, he became aware of a strong smell of flesh. The breeze had that moment changed and betrayed to the hungry lions that not far off some dead animal or other must be lying. Without any further hesita-

tion both sprang up and instinctively followed their noses, the smell of fresh meat so enticing them that the giraffes and the other lions were forgotten.

Although the buck had revealed to them the direction in which danger lurked, the giraffes were unable to discover the two lions, and a shudder passed over each one of them as the dreaded presence made itself known. For a moment they gazed motionlessly at the foe that had apparently risen up out of the earth and now trotted past them so unconcernedly ; then suddenly they wheeled about and started off with swirling tails into a long gallop.

Scarcely two hundred yards farther the lions came upon a dead gemsbok. A few hyenas were already at the feast. The pair approached cautiously up wind ; but when they saw that rabble at the booty, they rushed at them with savage growls. With the most hideous howls and screams the hyenas scattered. The lions sniffed a little at the gemsbok, then giving a deep croon of content, the male began to lick up the blood that had flowed from a bullet wound on to the grass, while his mate quickly tore open the belly, where the hyenas had prepared the way.

A toothsome gnawing and a cracking of bones soon proved that the two were getting on famously with their meal. Afar off in a wide half-circle the disappointed hyenas that had been driven off looked on as they crouched on their haunches or lay stretched flat on their paws. A few of the most hungry now and then dared to come a little nearer, but they were immediately driven back by threaten-

ing growls. A little jackal, to whom the presence of the lions was a kind of protection against the hyenas, came softly a little nearer and began cautiously to lick up the congealed clots of blood that lay in a gory trail some ten yards from the lions. The gemsbok seemed to have been dragged hither. By the hyenas? The two lions were a great deal too busy to consider the question.

In the meanwhile how had our other lions fared? Old Maanhaar did not wait for the young couple, but followed the spoor which turned back over the *laagte* right up to the *korongo*. For a little while they followed the dark windings of the sloot; then the old lion noticed with satisfaction that the spoor turned again to the left. He had not deceived himself: before sunset the wildebeest had been at the water, and from there had immediately made for their favourite haunt—a long, narrow *laagte*, which in the rainy season carries off some of the water from the *korongo*, and for this reason is nearly always green. Doubtless they would be there now.

When they got over the rise and descended to the *laagte* they beheld, with the utmost astonishment, right in front of them under a big tree, not the wildebeest, but—the camp fire of man! They could clearly hear the voices of human beings, and distinguished now and then the stamping and lowing of cattle. They had learned long since from wandering bands of Masais<sup>1</sup> that man and tame animals live together. They knew, too, that such animals taste good—even better than zebra—for one

<sup>1</sup> Masais = a native tribe.

evening not many weeks ago our two old couples had brought down here in the slood four fat oxen belonging to one of these nomadic families when the herds had tarried a little too long in the veld.



There, under a big thorn-tree, was the men's camp.

On this occasion they quite easily drove off the Masais, armed as they were with assegais and poisoned arrows; and in a cloud of dust the few hundred frightened animals stampeded into the kraal a few moments after their herdsmen.

The plan to surround the camp of these men immediately occurred to them all. The two old



males had often noticed during their adventurous life that at night human beings cannot so easily hurt them, and sometimes had even passed them by, quite unaware of their presence. And so they advanced fearlessly up to an ant-hill, less than a hundred yards from the fire. But in the bright moonlight they dared not advance any farther, for the veld was bare and man was watchful. At the lower end of the camp a great fire threw a red glow over the branches of thorn of which the little kraal was made, and upon a number of Kafirs sitting around, roasting meat, while they crooned a little song. Beside a smaller fire at the upper end sat two white hunters, upon whom the lions now concentrated their attention. There is no doubt that they are well able to distinguish between a white and a black man. A wounded lion will often rush past a Kafir in order to get at the European hunter on the other side of him.

Meanwhile, whatever thoughts may have been passing in the mind of the old leader, and however acutely his mouth may have been watering at the smell of the roast meat, he felt it was absolutely necessary to exercise patience. White men were *not* black men, that he knew. With the latter he often came in contact, even here in this world-forsaken wilderness, and always they preferred to give him the right of way : and even when they were in such great numbers as to attack him with their shining assegais he had always been able to retire easily into the undergrowth without any loss of dignity. From the blacks he had never heard

that terrifying report which spreads so much fear and consternation amongst the other wild creatures of the plain. With the white man distance gave no guarantee of safety. Did he not still bear a scar on his neck, as a reminder of his last encounter ?

With a grunt the old lion lay down flat beside the ant-hill so that he could just look over the edge. Now he was more sorry than ever that it was not a moonless night. The other lions stretched themselves out on the ground in various attitudes. All were on the alert, impatiently awaiting a sign from their commander. Only the youngsters remained sitting up. Three pairs of eyes, stretched to their widest, were fixed immovably on the fire. From the moment they became aware of these strange sights they had been unable to turn their faces away ; their playfulness and usual romps were entirely forgotten in the importance of these new and wonderful discoveries. Their mother had no trouble now in keeping them quiet : they were entirely dumbfounded.

Maanhaar took up his position in the firm hope that towards midnight all would be quiet in the men's camp, and he was not mistaken in his expectations. Gradually the voices were silenced and the fires burnt low until only glowing embers were left. The trek-oxen in the little kraal were also at rest. Nothing more was heard than from time to time a low moan or sigh of content. All seemed to be asleep. The only movement was made by the dogs lying round the kraal, where they were audibly crunching the remains of some game.

The moment which they had all awaited with so much impatience had come ! The time to act had arrived ! Meanwhile it had become plain to the old lions that there was only one way open : they must allow the oxen to break out of the kraal and give them a chance to escape from the protection of the hunters. In this way they were once more following their experience when dealing with wild game. Should a spot be unsuitable for their tactics, the game has to be driven to one more favourable. The stupid oxen once scattered over the veld, the rest would be easy enough.

With this aim the old *voorloper* rose and, followed by Kraagmannetjie, who could no longer restrain his impatience, went in a wide circle round the kraal in order to get to windward. This is the first step ; they know that in most cases their very smell is enough to set the animals on the run. If this did not succeed they must resort to stronger measures, even at the risk of being seen by the hunters.

The other lions remained lying near the ant-heap, not in the least uncertain about the part that they were soon to play.

Doubtless the manœuvre would have been entirely successful, for upon the instant that they smelt the lions, the oxen sprang up suddenly and began to tramp round restlessly with frightened snorting and sniffing ; but, unfortunately for the lions, they were not the only creatures to become aware of their presence ; the dogs jumped up simultaneously, making a fearful din as they rushed towards each other. Our two lions had not reckoned

on this. For a moment they stood there undecided, while the dogs, encouraging each other by their own clamour, alternately advanced and retreated.

Rage gained the upper hand. The annoying barking was too much for the lions ; besides, it had now gone so far that only immediate action could save the situation. With an angry growl old Maanhaar threw all fear to the winds, and uttering savage and baleful grunts, both of them rushed to attack the dogs.

They were almost at the kraal, and it really seemed as if the oxen in their deadly fright were going to break through . . . when suddenly there was a flash ! The terrible report in the silence of the night seemed to express some supernatural power. The oxen, reassured of the might of their protectors, quietened down. The lions vanished like shadows, and began, after a few moments and from a little distance, to utter their loud, full-throated roars.

Their first plan had miscarried, and they would now have to try another. The rifle-shot, followed by the roars of the two old lions, was sufficient to acquaint the others that their calculations had come to nothing, and that they must immediately rejoin their leaders. They now came nearer and nearer, their mighty voices causing the air around them to tremble, driving the dogs in a heap under the wagon, and forcing the frightened oxen into a state of utter desperation.

There ! Again ! flash two sparks of fire, a bullet whistles past Maanhaar's ear and almost

hits one of the cubs, who are being kept out of danger in the background by their mother. Instead of being frightened, these three inquisitive youngsters began to sniff at the spot where the bullet tore up the ground. Here at last was something tangible, and now they also would be able to play a part in the performance! With their little forepaws they began carefully to scrape away at the loosened earth and examine it with curiosity. But their zeal was brought suddenly to an end. Yet another shot rang out, called forth by the ever-increasing boldness of Maanhaar, and this time the mother lion sprang into the air, giving vent to a loud roar of terror. About twenty yards farther on the youngsters overtook her, where she had flung herself behind a dark bush. A continuous growling, which very soon became a roar and was interrupted only momentarily while she licked the painful wound in her hind foot, showed that she had no intention of moving another yard.

After the last shot the other lions quietly disappeared, but only to approach from another side. They would not give up hope yet. As a rule a hungry lion at night is not to be intimidated; indeed, he will even dare to spring upon an ox or a donkey which is being led by a *riem*.<sup>1</sup> But to-night the moon was so bright and the fires flared up so high, that the hunters were able to follow their movements distinctly; this the lions were aware of by the exact aim of the bullets, which every time whistled quite close to them.

<sup>1</sup> Riem=a strip of raw hide.

Now the young couple began to roar ! Their first hunger having been stilled, they began at last to think of their friends. Perhaps it was the hubbub of the encounter which reminded them of their duty. Seven lions—even the mother and her youngsters sprang up—stood suddenly still and listened. The roaring over there was a message and an invitation from comrades who had met with success. During all these happenings Maanhaar had wellnigh forgotten the two lions who had remained behind, and the sound that fell upon his ear was a pleasant surprise. Three times he uttered a long-drawn “uummppf” in answer. Then they all went off at a quick trot round the kraal in the direction of those roars.

They had scarcely gone a few hundred yards when Maanhaar suddenly bent down low and stared immovably at a pale object right in front of him. The other lions immediately followed his example. They were quite convinced it was game—but alive or dead ? A jackal, startled by a slight noise that one of the cubs made in the grass, jumped all at once into view behind the animal at which he was quietly eating away, and so broke the suspense. Good fortune had led the lions right up to a dead zebra. Or was it misfortune ? Surely the latter : so it seemed to a disappointed “fox,” who now saw his expectations of a night of feasting and a whole week without any further cares all at once so cruelly dashed to the ground. And dawn would reveal that Reynard was not so very far wrong in his calculations.



Now and again the young pair had been making themselves heard, and at about half-past two, when only a few bones and the neck of the zebra were left, Maanhaar with his mate and the youngsters went towards them. The manner of the repeated roaring told them that the young pair had been lucky, and the old leader felt that a few more titbits would not do him any harm.

Kraagmannetjie and his mate remained lying alongside the skeleton. For a long time after the departure of the others no noise but the cracking of bones betrayed their presence.

At last the moon, shining so beautifully all night, sank behind the summits of the mountains, and the whole valley, with its thousands of wild inhabitants, was suddenly hidden in dark and mysterious shadow. The morning star, left for one short moment to reign supreme, glittered with unwonted brilliancy high up in the dark sky. Will the lions take heed of its friendly warning?

Another point of light occupied the whole of Kraagmannetjie's attention at this moment. He gazed uneasily at the camp-fire over there, which had again suddenly flared up. He had come to the conclusion that the booty belonged to the men, whose scent was still about the zebra on their arrival, and this made him afraid that the return to the *korongo* might perhaps be cut off. As the dawn grew appreciably brighter his anxiety increased. He had already risen a few times in order to begin the return journey, but his mate seemed loth to say good-bye to her pickings.



All at once they heard the rumble of old Maanhaar's mighty voice, which was followed by the roars of all the lions with him. The repetition of their cries a little farther off proved that they were already on the way. Kraagmannetjie now also uttered some of his deepest notes and walked off with determination. Only when he was at some distance did his mate jump up suddenly and follow him.

They trotted to the right past the camp, to get on the spoor of the other lions. When they got over the little hill Kraagmannetjie felt more at ease. Before him was the bit of level ground, bounded on the farther side by the *korongo*, where safety lay. His satisfaction and joy of life found expression in a long-sustained roar, which received a speedy answer from up there in the sloot. The other lions had arrived !

If only he had kept quiet ! They had hardly left the bones of the zebra when life began to stir in the hunter's camp, and a moment later two figures slipped behind a tree up to the animal they had left as lion-bait, and discovered that they were too late. Quickly they visited the dead gemsbok, but also in vain : Maanhaar had forestalled them ! Just then Kraagmannetjie had roared behind the rise, and a moment later shots fell from the hill.

The female gave an agonised roar, sprang high into the air, and after rushing for a few yards like a mad creature, fell to the ground. While she was roaring furiously and trying in vain to regain her feet, the bullets whistled round her mate. He stood as though turned to stone, while rage mastered him,

and if he could have seen the hunters at that moment he would certainly have made a rush at them. But the hill was far away and his pursuers invisible. It was already day and the sand was flying up around him, so with a menacing growl he began to gallop over the flats.

Before he reached the slood he looked round once more. There they came, the hated beings, right up to his mate, who was now wrestling in her last throes. Even from here the death rattle in her throat was audible !

With a feeling of helpless rage he at last jumped into the slood and trotted slowly along under the big trees to his former hiding-place.



### CHAPTER III



MAANHAAR and his companions heard the shooting, and were sitting bolt upright at the entrance to their lair. All of them stared with anxious expectation down into the plain; all except the cubs who, quite tired out by a night of unusual exertion, had stretched themselves out upon the ledge in the first rays of the morning sun, and were already fast asleep, their soft paws extended in every direction.

They saw Kraagmannetjie climb out of the *korongo* just below them, and come towards them—alone! As soon as he saw them he uttered a plaintive “aaaoouu” and looked back over the plain to see if, perhaps, his mate were coming along from another direction. For half a minute he stood thus, then giving vent to a smothered growl he came slowly nearer. Every five or six yards he stood still to look round. At last with an impatient movement he shook the dew from his head and joined the other lions.

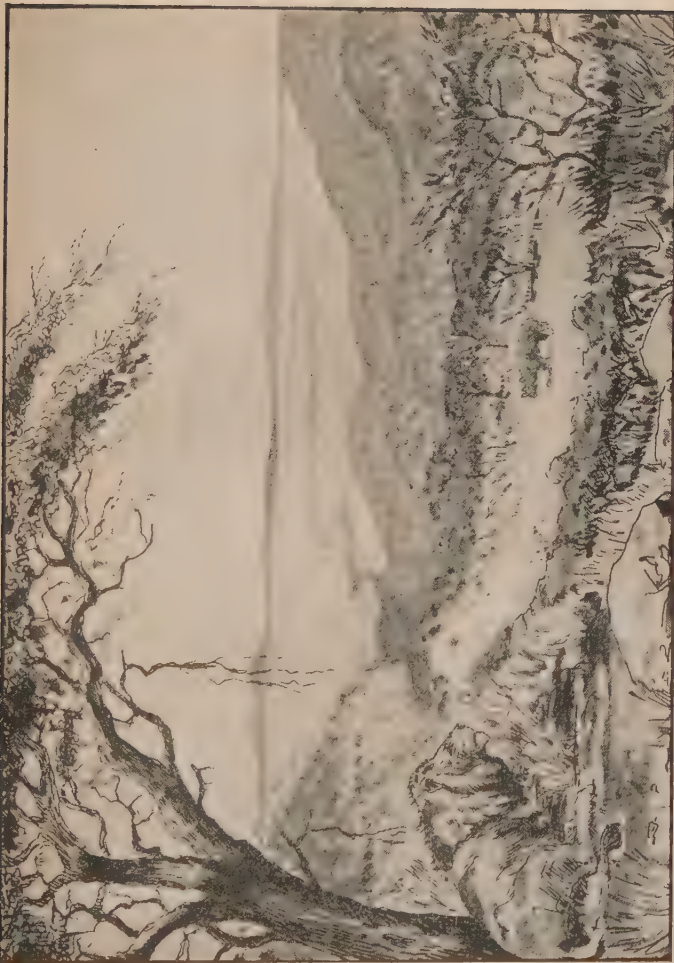
For a long time they sat there on the alert,

although the desire to sleep was becoming overpowering. The old lions knew very well what had happened to the unfortunate lioness. First those shots, then the behaviour of Kraagmannetjie, and now his mate's long absence—all this could only have one explanation. Above all, how well old Maanhaar recalled that not so long ago he also suffered just such a loss. They all remembered that men often followed their spoor, and fear lest they be surprised in their sleep kept them awake.

When after an hour nothing was seen or heard of the human beings, the lions one by one went to lie down. Only Kraagmannetjie remained sitting up. He stared incessantly down into the plain, his collar bristling spasmodically, while moans escaped from his oppressed heart.

That he should have been driven off like that !

But when the sun rose higher and it grew hotter, the desire for sleep began to overpower him too ; and when two rhinoceroses coming down the *korongo* began to graze right opposite him, he felt more at ease and went to lie down. Those two sturdy sentinels would give the necessary warning in good time. With the heavy head on his outstretched paws and the drowsy eyes already closed, the old lion seemed to have fallen asleep at once. However, a slight twitching of his muscles revealed that his thoughts were still occupied with recent events, and after a while he again half-opened his eyes to take once more an impression of the plain. He could not resign himself to sleep.



Pffrrr! down below in the slout.





Pffrrr ! down below in the sloot ! Kraagmannetjie opened his eyes again with a start. The foremost rhinoceros, almost black with mud in which he had recently been rolling, still stood in the undergrowth on the other side of the *korongo*, where the lion could plainly follow his movements. But he suddenly left off eating, and gazed before him along the sloot with concentrated attention. Pffrrr ! Again the rhinoceros appeared to hear a doubtful noise, and his ears moved backwards and forwards uneasily as if they were seeking for the repetition of certain sounds. Kraagmannetjie grew impatient. Whatever was up with the rhino ?

A shot rang out ! The rhinoceros fell on his knees, but jumped up again and charged, snorting ferociously. Another shot ! At the first report all the lions sat up in the twinkling of an eye, and observed how the raging creature made a rush at the hunter, and how even at the second shot he was not brought down. Just as the rhinoceros lowered his horn to pierce his enemy, the hunter was lucky enough to find the root of a tree growing out of the bank, by which he drew himself out of the way. The snorting animal rushed underneath it and made a dash at the second hunter, who, standing a few yards off, now began to shoot at him. The lions waited no longer. With every hair on end they sprang over the bank into the sloot and clambered up the other side, then trotted quickly for a while along the mountain-side so as to get again into the *korongo* a little higher up. Fortunately the hunters there in the undergrowth did not notice any of these move-

ments ; they were busily engaged just then with the rhinoceros, who had so innocently frustrated their plans against the lions.

In one of the countless little sloots, where the *korongo* comes to an end against a mountain *krans*, there the lions now hid themselves. It was not long ere they heard human voices approaching. Instinctively the eyes of the lions began to glitter and their manes to bristle. Snarling angrily, Maanhaar climbed the left bank to spy the land. The hunters, led by their dogs, got the lions' spoor and were coming quickly along the slood. Giving a short cry of alarm—"arruauu"—Maanhaar sprang back, ran up the little kloof for a bit, then climbed out of it and galloped up the mountain, followed by the other lions.

At the foot of the *krans* they disappeared in the high grass and scrub, threading their way between the large, loose stones, to reappear a moment later on top of the huge masses of rock. Cautiously the old leader approached the ridge and lay between the small bushes growing in its cracks. His heavily maned head pressed against a stone, he was just able to peep over the edge and observe the movements of the hunters. Behind him, and round about wherever the shrubs offered a little shade, the other lions threw themselves down, hoping at last to get some rest. The three cubs, still panting hard from their unwonted fatigue, worried their reluctant mother to give them a drink.

A little while longer they were able to hear and see the men searching about the slood, covered here

with low vegetation and ending abruptly against the *krans*. Eventually the hunters seemed to give up the search and disappeared round the spur of the mountain.

“ At last ! There they go, those extraordinary upright figures, those detested disturbers of our peace ! Why do they so implacably pursue us ? Don’t we always get out of *their* way ? ” At these thoughts Maanhaar snarled involuntarily, and in the glances he threw at his hated pursuers there flamed up an ominous desire for revenge. The conviction that this enmity was not one which flared up at a casual meeting, but was a deliberate feud inexorably pursued by these men, who followed them right into their most rugged fastnesses, filled the old lion with rage and—yes—with fear. Never had he met with such enemies in all his wide hunting-grounds ; and the mere thought that there could exist a being who systematically plotted his destruction, was enough to fill the angry old lion with an inexplicable apprehension and anxiety. At the same time the feelings that the other animals had against the white man were not unknown to him. Wherever his impudent, meagre figure appeared, every wild creature fled before him. Did he not see just now how the men remained masters of the field even against the dangerous rhinoceros ?

Long after the hunters had disappeared from the scene the old lion still lay there in a surly mood. At last he rose, stretched himself sleepily, and then went farther back, seeking shelter from the sun’s rays. With much yawning the other lions crept

in one by one beside him. Their lair was not nearly so pleasant as the other one down there ; but to that place they would indeed not return just yet. Meanwhile they felt quite safe up here, and what they longed for most of all at the moment was rest.



Old Maanhaar threw himself down on a flat rock.

The last lion, the gloomy and silent Kraagmannetjie, had found a resting-place under a small wild-fig tree near an overhanging rock, when the three cubs, lying stretched out fast asleep on a warm flat rock, awoke with a start. With a look of consternation on their funny little faces they jumped up as soon as they noticed the other lions were not beside them. A croon-like growl from

their mother reassured them and enticed them to come under the tree too.

It had become quite hot, and the lions, sleepy and tired after their long gallop on a full stomach, soon fell into a well-deserved sleep.

When the sinking sun again bathed the landscape in purple and gold, and a cool zephyr began to blow from the plain, the lions reappeared, one by one, to stretch their mighty limbs on top of their rocky slab in the last rays.

The whole sky was a dark wine-coloured red, against which Maanhaar's majestic form, standing up there on the highest rock, was distinctly etched. It was unthinkable that fear could assail that proud figure. The shaggy head held high, the nose against the wind, the eyes unswervingly levelled at the valley stretching sombrely under the glowing sunset, he seemed in the fullness of his strength to be drinking in the joy of life.

Who shall assert that of all this immensity around him nothing penetrated his consciousness? Surely no one who has stood before the iron bars of a lion's cage in a zoological garden and seen the hungry, longing gaze directed far over the heads of the onlookers to the distant hills, that ever restless pacing up and down behind those prison bars, and the inexpressible desire for freedom—a desire which no amount of food can satisfy!

At the approach of night Maanhaar's self-confidence returned. After all, were they not the rulers of the whole animal world? If only they could find a means to fight the hated white man!

At this thought the old lion gave expression to the anger which he had had to suppress the whole day in long-sustained, threatening roars, which tore through the clefts, re-echoing from every fold of the hills ; and far down in the plain the zebras and other game shivered with fright, notwithstanding that it was still daylight. Then he threw himself down again, for he had no intention of going down before night had quite fallen.

Soon the other lions were lying half-asleep again, apparently too lazy even to join in the usual concert. Only Kraagmannetjie was restless. Every now and then he got up, went to the top of the *krans*, gazed about him in every direction, then returned to lie down again with a moan. It was evident he had not forgotten that morning's tragedy, and soon he too gave vent to his pent-up fury, for it was only by an outburst of roaring that he could regain the feeling that he was indeed a lion.

For a long time the lions remained there pleasantly snoozing, as they still felt fairly replete. Old Maanhaar dozed off, making plans first to go and drink, and afterwards to hunt up the rhinoceros which the hunters had shot in the morning. He had learnt that when man comes in conflict with wild animals, as a rule one or two victims remain on the field. A lion like this, whose life is so full of adventures, so rich in encounters and in conquests, sometimes too in defeat and flight, must necessarily gradually develop an exceptional sagacity and become a most expert hunter. Lessons once learnt he will not easily forget.



When at ten o'clock Maanhaar again awoke, his first thought was—water. The other lions were already awake ; all of them had begun to get restless ; all were thirsty. But where was Kraagmannetjie ? One glance was enough to tell them that his vigorous form was not one of their number. Maanhaar sniffed along the stones in the direction of the mountain, and perceived that his comrade had gone back by the path they had used that morning.

Whither ? The old lion was astounded. It did not often happen that they acted independently of each other. Meanwhile the other lions had risen, and when their old leader's deep "uuumppf" was heard at the bottom of the *krans*, one by one they followed him, the young male bringing up the rear.

Not taking much notice of the game they met on the way, which this evening seemed to be particularly numerous everywhere, our little group of lions reached the spring, and there they drank to their hearts' content in one of the deep holes trampled into the wet ground by the rhinoceroses. At an easy pace they began the return journey across the magically moonlit veld. Maanhaar went in front. His restless glances were not now intent on game ; he was anxious at the long absence of his old comrade, whom he had expected to meet on the path to the water. He had already tried the three smothered roars, their usual signal, but in vain. Now he roared a bit louder, and a little farther away they actually heard a troop of game rushing across the

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plain with thundering hoofs, and then soon after Kraagmannetjie came up. As soon as he observed them he trotted nearer, grumbling "brom-brom" with every sign of alarm.

When he had left the other lions he slipped down



the *korongo*, intent upon revisiting the scene of the morning's tragedy. When he arrived at the spot where the rhinoceros had been, he perceived blood there ; and although he was not exactly hungry, he followed its spoor involuntarily—that is, after all, according to a lion's nature. The spoor continued for a little way along the slood, then turned to the

left alongside the bank, and up there under a huge acacia he came upon the rhinoceros—dead. But to-night there was no time to feed ; he must go on and make an end to his tormenting uncertainty. Having licked up the blood, flowing from the snout where the horn had been cut off, he went on and at last reached the spot where his mate had fallen.

But here only the sad sight of her skeleton greeted him. Its bones, already cleaned by the jackals and *aasvoëls*,<sup>1</sup> lay scattered over the veld. A long, long “aaaaoouu” escaped his breast at this sight, proving that the pangs of grief can also be felt by a lion. Full of hatred he raised his eyes in the direction of the men’s camp and—discovered the approaching forms of the two hunters ! Carelessly they advanced over the brilliantly lit plain right in his direction.

The old lion came to a terrible decision. Impressed by what he had just witnessed, he forgot for a moment his fear of man, the fact that the moonlight afforded him but uncertain protection, forgot all—but that here he had his deadly enemies before him. In the twinkling of an eye he hid away in a few small bushes, preparatory to making a spring. To-night he would without doubt satisfy his desire for revenge.

The hunters came nearer. The lion crouched there quite visible, yet remained unnoticed, as he was indistinguishable from the bushes. His ears, hitherto held flat, flickered suddenly uneasily backwards and forwards, for they had perceived another

<sup>1</sup> Aasvoëls = vultures.

noise besides that of the approaching footsteps of the two men. Meanwhile the foremost hunter came up to within ten yards. The lion drew himself together. But at that very moment he heard footsteps and voices quite distinctly behind him ! It was a number of the hunters' dogs and bearers coming from another direction. A quick turn of his head and a single glance at the overwhelming forces behind him was enough for Kraagmannetjie. No lion can bear the idea of being encircled. So in a second he jumped up, and before the astounded hunters could shoot he had melted away in the moonlight. A little later he recognised Maanhaar's call in the direction of the watering-place.

Involuntarily the manes of the other lions began to bristle when they saw Kraagmannetjie's excited condition, as with growls he stepped among them to get down to the water. Looking at him with astonishment and curiosity while he quenched his thirst they all stopped still, inquisitively awaiting what he should do next.

He gave a sigh of satisfaction, then came towards them a little way and, looking questioningly from one to another, he threw a significant glance in the direction of the place where he had met the men, and then began to stride away without more ado. Supposing that the men would still be at the skeleton of his mate, he made a detour towards the dead rhinoceros. As this entirely fell in with Maanhaar's plans, he readily resigned the lead to Kraagmannetjie, and the other lions followed in Indian file.



In the moonlight.





They arrived at the *korongo* a few minutes later, without finding any trace of the hunters.

At a shallow place the lions slipped down the bank and under the dark trees. The moonlight penetrated here and there through the luxuriant foliage stretching above them, and threw fantastic shadow-shapes upon the white driftsands. Noiselessly the lions' supple bodies glided over the sand—so quietly that they could hardly be distinguished from the flecks of moonlight fluttering softly backwards and forwards as the wind stirred the leaves above. In an open spot they came suddenly upon signs which revealed the presence of a rhinoceros—fresh signs too, for the scent was still strong, and the sand which the creature had turned up with his horn and had strewn about in every direction with his feet was still quite damp. Presumably he had had a fit of rage, for a rhinoceros digging in the sand for water would have known better than to tear up the ground in this aimless way. It might possibly have been the mate of the dead one, who had in this fashion cooled his anger after a fruitless search for his erstwhile companion. The lions suddenly sniffed the wind; they had got the scent of the dead creature. Kraagmannetjie stalked quietly along; he already knew all.

Nevertheless, when near the acacia he moved more cautiously, and the others also spread out instinctively to make sure that no ambush lay behind the booty. No lion ever goes blindly up to something that he has not killed himself—except when the presence of other beasts of prey has

reassured him. The three cubs began to grunt directly they saw that dark mass lying there under the tree. They, at all events, knew nothing of timidity, and their mother had great difficulty in restraining them. After their extraordinary experience of last night, when for the very first time they had actually gone a-hunting, they had no mind any longer to take a silent part in things, and the anticipation of a repetition of the fun exhilarated them.

Some *aasvoëls*, with wings loudly flapping, rose from the acacia when old Maanhaar suddenly uttered just beneath them in his gruff voice a deep, quivering "grrrrr" of satisfaction—so deep that even the practised ear of the hunter would have had difficulty in deciding whether the rumbling were five or five hundred yards away. The old leader had feared that they would not be able to deal with the rhinoceros that night, and that they would be compelled to wait a few days until the thick skin became decomposed and more manageable. He noticed with great surprise that a piece of the skin on the rump had been cut away, as if some one had purposely meant to make things comfortable for him and his retinue. Even if this did appear to him to be somewhat suspicious, it remained a pleasant surprise, for his appetite was enormously whetted by the smell of the fresh meat.

Kraagmannetjie meanwhile had brought his investigations to an end, and discovered that to-night at all events no human being had been near the dead beast. Had it been otherwise. he might perhaps

have found a better explanation of the actions of the hunters during the night.

How could they know that the hunters had indeed cut out that bit just for them—and just large enough to permit of them all getting a taste of the flesh, but not so large as to allow them to go away sated before daybreak? Still less could they imagine that at the very moment they greedily began to feed upon the rhinoceros, the two hunters were spreading their rugs under a bush near-by, waiting for the dawn, when they would bring the feast to a tragic end.



## CHAPTER IV



WHILE the two old lions were feeding in a brotherly way at the same little opening, the others tried in vain to find an accessible spot in the tough hide of the rhinoceros. The mother lion at last pressed against Maanhaar with a growl to remind him of his duty. Now the two lionesses got a chance, but when the young male also tried to push himself nearer, Maanhaar suddenly made a threatening rush at him. At once the younger lion lay down, he flattened his ears and growled under his breath, but did not venture to offer any opposition to his commander.

No lion ever humbles himself so far as to turn his back on a stronger one. If he sees there is no chance of defending himself with success, he simply throws himself down, thus acknowledging the superiority of his rival, who generally does not carry matters any farther than to adopt for a

moment a threatening attitude towards his inferior. Whether, however, an encounter would have ended in a triumph for Maanhaar is doubtful, for although of heavier and stronger build, he did not now possess the glistening and perfect fangs of the younger lion.

The lioness had at last been able to tear off a piece of the flesh, and had given it to the cubs to stay their impatience and persistency. They took it aside, making comical attempts to imitate the manners of the older lions and to intimidate each other. The strongest of them, whose well-built forequarters and disproportionately large forepaws stamped him as the successor to old Maanhaar, at last seized the piece of meat and ran behind a tree with it. Here the other two fell upon him, and for quite a while their noisy bickering went on. They really did not as yet need much meat, and soon began to walk round and round the rhinoceros, sniffing it all over, as if they wished to determine what variety of game it really could be.

The full-grown lions alternately tried to get what they could out of the hole in the carcass ; and although by now it was so eaten into that both head and neck disappeared and only very small pieces of flesh could be torn off, yet they felt perfectly satisfied to-night. Those awaiting their turn filled in the pauses by keeping a look-out, or by rolling in the sand. Peace had been re-established between Maanhaar and the young lion, and all of them were in a particularly good frame of mind, for they concluded that this huge dead creature would suffice to ward

off any trouble or anxiety for several days. It would be an easy matter, here in the undergrowth, to keep the *aasvoëls* at a distance—in the bare, open flats, whatever is left over from the lions' kill is devoured by these birds by the first light of day. The hyenas could also be kept in order if they should get the scent and leave their lairs down there to come to the booty. In this way our little company of lions had mapped it all out very nicely. Even their dangerous enemy—man—was for the time being quite forgotten, and when at about four o'clock the three males began one after the other to roar, it was merely to express their satisfaction and intense joy of life.

The two older lions left the shadow of the acacia for the full moonlight, and began to scratch up the ground with their claws. This exercise sharpened their nails, while at the same time they made use of the loosened earth to take a sand bath. With a good deal of yawning and grunting the two old fellows stretched and rolled over and over, then at last remained for a little while stretched out lazily at full length. All around reigned the silence of the last hour of night. The two lions raised their heads and seemed to be listening intently: they were looking for the first signs of approaching day. Old Maanhaar wanted to get away before it grew light, and felt that day would soon be breaking. The lion seems to have an extra sense by which he knows exactly when to expect daylight before there seems to be any sign of it—at least to human perceptions.



Only the young couple were still busy feeding under the tree. Maanhaar's mate began to grow uneasy, and stood undecidedly half-way between the rhinoceros and the two males. The pain, which the cold morning air brought to the open wound in her foot, prevented her from forgetting the danger, and she had suddenly noticed that an *aasvoël*, which stood out black against the sky on the top of a thorn-tree, was already preening his feathers. The youngsters, for whom her anxiety was naturally greatest, had meanwhile grown sleepy ; and as this spot was as good as any other to them, two were already asleep against the tree-stem, where they had scratched up the earth to make a comfortable couch for themselves. The third still sat up—right upon the head of the rhinoceros—watching the two lions eating. This tearing out of the flesh seemed suddenly to arouse his admiration to the greatest degree.

Meanwhile the two old lions stood up, shook the sand off their bodies, and began for the last time to roar to their hearts' content ere taking leave of this spot. Their rousing "good-morning" was infectious. One by one the other lions joined in, until again the full lion choir made the mountains rumble and reverberate. The alarmed *aasvoëls* left their perches in the surrounding trees and flew up into the dark sky ; and far away from out the plain, where the moonlight retreated farther and farther before the shadow of the mountain, there came an answer from two other lions.

Maanhaar's gruff, low final note, "uuuumppp—uumppf—mmmf," had hardly faded away softly

in the distance, like an echo, ere he disappeared with his mate and cubs over the bank into the undergrowth in the *korongo*. He was followed by Kraagmannetjie, who had good reason to know the wisdom of a timely return journey. The young couple, who had had less chance of feeding and had not yet had much experience of man, remained at the rhinoceros.

After a bit, when it was already growing light, the lion lay down beside the rhinoceros, waiting patiently and carelessly until his mate should be finished—carelessly, for it seemed to him that up here in this rugged recess of the mountain there could be no danger of human beings, especially at dawn.

The hunters judged from Maanhaar's roars, higher up in the slood, that the lions had left the rhinoceros, and crept cautiously between the high grass to the bank until they were about ten yards from the rhino. At the very moment that Maanhaar and his companions reached the little slood, crossing the *korongo*, and stood there in doubt whether to spend the day again on the *krans*, or rather to venture to creep into their old lair here in the bank where they could observe all that was happening at the rhinoceros—at that very moment the lioness sprang up into the air with a roar, a bullet through her heart. Her startled mate, whom the hunters had not seen as he lay behind the rhinoceros, took the slood at a single bound, while the unhappy lioness got no farther than its brink in her attempt to follow him. In despair she fastened her teeth in the painful wound, alternately

roaring in her rage or growling piteously. A minute more and all was over.

Simultaneously the young lion had crept under some rank shrubs and now repeatedly uttered the



The white hunters were with the Kafirs—this the young lion noticed at once.

peculiar sound—"uuuupp"—with which lions call to each other when they wish not to make too much noise in the presence of danger. But this time he called in vain ; and when two dim shapes appeared on the ledge above him and peered searchingly down into the bushes, he softly crept yet farther into them.

The hunters, having no dogs with them, saw the uselessness of further effort, and after a little while withdrew. A few Kafirs came half an hour later to skin the dead lioness ; but as they approached, the threatening form of her mate rose up suddenly near her, and in confusion they cleared off.

The lion made fruitless attempts to bring his mate to life. Patting her with his forepaw, as he had so often done in play or when they teased each other, he gave vent repeatedly to a soft, half-plaintive cry—"aa'ôuu." Then, as if in despair, he walked once or twice round her insensitive body, licked at the blood of her wound, walked a few yards away, and again cried "uuuupp" as if he would persuade her to follow him. At last with a plaintive groan he threw himself down beside her, his eyes directed toward the spot on the hills where the Kafirs had disappeared.

It was not so very long after this that they began actually to return, but this time accompanied by the two white hunters. This last fact the lion noticed at once. Growling maliciously under his breath, he jumped into the slood and lay down under an overhanging bank near-by. Soon he heard right over his head the dull tread of the men, and saw their dark shadows falling upon the bushes just below him. Involuntarily he began to growl, and so betrayed his hiding-place. A moment later he sprang up, greatly perturbed, for he heard quite distinctly cautious footsteps on the sand of the slood and, while still undecided whether to attack or to flee, his tail beating convulsively from side to side,

he heard immediately behind him other footsteps from above coming nearer to him. At the same moment there was a snapping of twigs on the opposite bank where the Kafirs were approaching. They intend to corner him ! That is indeed too much ! Giving a menacing, abrupt cry—"grrroau"—he rushed up the bank in the only direction in which escape was still open. In doing this he almost collided with one of the hunters, who had silently taken up his position there, and whose bullet tore up the ground right underneath the lion, who crossed in a few strides the little opening in which the rhinoceros lay, and disappeared into a branch of the *korongo*.

Even now he did not go to seek the other lions. When the hunters followed him even here, he glided through the shrubs back to where the little sloot rejoined the *korongo*. And this dangerous game of hide-and-seek went on for some time, in which the hunters caught a glimpse of him now and then ; but each time he got away before the eye could obtain a full view of him. But to run away like that alone and leave his mate, that he could not do ! Indeed, if the forces against him had not been so overwhelming, he would not have dreamt of flight at all. But the events of the last two days, the death of the rhinoceros, the disappearance of Kraagmannetjie's mate, and especially the state of his own mate and the shot aimed at himself—all these things combined to shake his usual self-confidence, and for the moment to rob him of all courage to deal with these bold and troublesome pursuers.

At last the Kafirs were finished with their flaying, and all of them, the hunters included, went down again to the camp in the plain. Quite a good while, after all was still again, the lion ventured to leave his hiding-place in the shrubs of the *korongo* and show himself again under the acacia on its bank. There he stood looking affrightedly at the change those ravaging hands had wrought. At last he began to comprehend that never again would she rise ; and gloomily he threw himself down in the shade of the tree.

The day was growing hot. The inquisitive streaks of sunlight were penetrating into the last dark kloofs of the mountain, driving the shadows farther away into the deepest parts of the forests lower down. The *aasvoëls*, which ever since sunrise had been circling around on high, whose numbers kept on steadily increasing, began to fly lower and lower and to watch with greedy glances the booty down there. Except for their presence, a stranger would have believed himself to be utterly forsaken here. The few animals that during the night roamed the neighbourhood of the mountain, were chased away by the hunters when they departed ; and in the silence one would hardly have supposed that quite close by, under the acacia, there lay in restless slumber a male lion, his head and forepaws covered by a rough, bushy mane of silver-grey, that a little higher up old Maanhaar and his family were resting under the *krans*, and that a little lower down, at the edge of the dark green forest, the mate of the fallen rhinoceros was taking his midday nap, leaning against a wild olive.



The young lion, awaking from his doze, noticed that the shadows had shifted, so he rose and walked slowly away to seek the others.

The vultures, who are in very bad odour with the lion because they devour his booty as soon as his back is turned, did not dare to alight on the ground as long as the young lion remained lying under the tree ; he was much too near to the coveted prize. But he had hardly gone twenty yards when the first vulture fell upon the dead lioness. Furiously the lion sprang round, and the bird had only just time to save himself by a hasty retreat.

Instead of following his former plan, the lion crept under the dense bushes near the dead lioness. To-day at all events the vultures and jackals should not touch his murdered mate !

## CHAPTER V



THE magical moonlight was flooding the mountains and spreading a soft sheen over the plain, through which meandered the *korongo* with its dark trees. A pleasant breeze was blowing from the plain, and the whinnying and loud snorting of zebras was plainly audible up here on the ledge of rock, where our three lions and the little cubs were resting. Not very far off one heard every now and then the wailing howl of hyena and jackal, wandering disconsolately about, wondering what could have become of the group of lions, who all these last months had left for them so many delicious bits of surplus zebra or wildebeest. They had not yet discovered the dead rhinoceros, for since yesterday the wind had been blowing towards the mountain, and the lairs of the hyenas were mostly down in the slood. They had left this corner of the hills long ago in possession of the lions.

Since sunset our lions lay there on their rocky

ledge, listening ceaselessly for any sound that might come from their two companions. Early that morning they had heard the gunshot and the dying lioness's cry of agony which immediately followed it, and for a long while thereafter they remained



awake, watching to see if one of those two should survive. That one of them would never return, the experienced old lions understood well enough from the noises they had heard up here. The movements of the men afterwards, the shot at the young lion hardly served to make them more at ease, and so they still lay there, although daylight had long since faded and everything tempted them

to make a little journey through the beautiful moonlit landscape.

The voices of the hyenas meanwhile increased their restlessness. Was that rabble at the rhinoceros? This thought and the fact that no lion's roar was heard down there in defence of their prey, brought the old leader to his feet at last, to gaze down searchingly from his high rock. But at this distance he could discern nothing; and later he glided in the moonlight through the grass, down the mountain-side, followed by the others. No sound announced their coming, for their experienced leader feared that danger lurked behind the dead rhinoceros, and he did not wish to betray their presence to the invisible foe.

When half-way to the rhinoceros, on a broad strip of white sand where isolated trees stood, they saw the young lion approaching. It was easy to recognise him by his shining mane, even if his behaviour had not speedily shown that it was indeed he. When he saw them he gave a croon of relief and came quickly up to them. In silence they all smelt at him, and this gave him great pleasure, for the persecution of those men and the loneliness of the morning had begun to arouse in him a feeling of longing for their company; besides, there was something in the carriage and bearing of sage old Maanhaar which attracted his follower and filled his breast with confidence. What could be more natural than that the young lion in his dilemma should think of fetching his old leader and taking him to that place of misfortune?

He now turned back, and after spurring on the others two or three times with a cry—"uuupp"—and looking round to see if they were following, he trotted quickly in advance as if he were anxious to show them what had happened.

With noses up wind the lions moved cautiously towards the rhinoceros, suspiciously sniffing the air, so as to make sure there was no ambush. Appearing in the shadows cast by the acacia on the bank, they discovered with astonishment that two strange lions were already quietly feasting upon the rhinoceros. This was indeed too much for our lions, who, as it was, had not been in a good temper for the last two days. Ominously the two old males advanced, their tails curved, and along backbone and neck the hair rose stiffly on end. Nearer they came with threatening growls that grew louder and louder at every step.

However, the strange couple was not to be driven off so easily. Savagely they sprang in front of the rhinoceros and, exhibiting towards these greater numbers a determination they certainly did not possess, they tried to frighten the others away.

But the old lions did not allow themselves to be bluffed, and the courage of the two strangers diminished steadily. It seemed to them as if Maanhaar were swelling to an unusual size under his rough, dark mane. Beside him came Kraagmannetjie determinedly nearer—step by step—and in the background the two other lions and the cubs were visible ; and who knows whether more are

not coming over the bank ? Growling angrily, the two walked away and lay down in the grass about ten yards off.

As soon as the mother lioness became aware of the presence of strange lions she remained behind with her little ones, afraid of the danger for them if it should come to a fight between their elders. But these three bold little robbers were quite lively again after a day's undisturbed rest, and were full of eagerness to begin the night's feast on the rhinoceros, and by a continual grunting, just like little pigs, they showed distinctly that they did not agree with her in her hesitation, and threatened to run off to the attack with all their might. What was there to be afraid of ? The menacing attitudes of the big lions towards each other meant to them nothing more than a repetition of the ceremony on that evening when the young couple had joined them. In their opinion the more lions, the more fun. The lioness checked their impatience with loud growls as though she were terribly angry, and one would almost have believed she was threatening them with their lives ; but this was indeed no more than an almost imploring warning, and although she now and then seemed roughly to knock down with her forepaw one or other of the daring little fellows, they were not hurt in the least. A lioness is an anxious and one of the most passionate of mothers, as many a hunter has discovered to his cost.

At last she succeeded so far in calming them as to be able to leave them alone, while she went to



feed with the other two lions. She thought it best to leave them behind because, although the two strangers had been chased off, they did not appear to have any intention of going away, for the male lion had risen again apparently with the object of seeking a friendly reconciliation. Only a few days back the cubs would not have attempted to get up from the spot where she had left them, but to-night things were not so simple : they were becoming independent, and in a few days more it would no longer be possible to push them aside in this way.

Our young lion looked on rather indifferently while the four others were standing up to each other. He was not going to fight this evening for the possession of the rhinoceros. Although his hunger was intense, he did no more than sniff at the rhino and remained beside his dead mate, who still lay there unharmed by the vultures. The attempts of the morning were repeated again and again, until at last quite disheartened he threw himself down once more beside her with a long-drawn groan. A plaintive cry, almost human, repeatedly escaped his breast, alternating with intermittent pauses and deep groans.<sup>1</sup>

It was after the first soft rains of the year, when love and life quickened everywhere in awakening Nature, that while hunting upon a certain dark night he had heard far down in the valley, near a little rain pool, the love-call of a lonely lioness, and he had answered it. When, after a few days, the

<sup>1</sup> Previous to this experience I should never have believed that a lion could mourn like this.—“SANGIRO”

pool was licked dry by the game that streamed thither, and no fresh rain having fallen, he led his mate up here to the little spring he had formerly known where, as we have seen, he made the acquaintance of old Maanhaar. It was during the celebration of their first happy meeting that his mate was shot beside the rhinoceros. So it was no wonder that the young male felt his loss so much more than did old Kraagmannetjie, who had almost ceased to play the rôle of lover.

Meanwhile the two older lions left the young one undisturbed in his sorrow, for of course as long as that strange couple remained so close by, they could not leave the rhinoceros. The strange lion came closer, and while some distance off began to fawn and coax: sinking his head humbly and looking straight before him along the ground, he attempted to make his gruff voice as flattering as possible, and the plaintive turn he gave to every growl as he came nearer and nearer, contrasted comically with a voice so seldom used to pleading. But even at the first step there began a dull rumbling within old Maanhaar, between clenched teeth as it were, like distant thunder, growing louder and louder at each step taken by the stranger. The lioness, seeing renewed danger threatening her cubs, also began to growl angrily, and Kraagmannetjie, with a piece of flesh in his jaws, rose up behind the rhinoceros and, planting his forepaws firmly upon the dead creature, looked round challengingly while he devoured his mouthful.

After this unsuccessful attempt the two dis-

appointed lions went off to seek their luck elsewhere. Expressing all his pride and anger in a short, menacing "grrrrr——!" the male turned round quickly and, stepping grumblingly up to his lioness, who still stood there in expectation, he wended his way with a determined air away from the enticing scene down there under the acacia. Before they passed the open, moonlit spot, separating the little sloot from the *korongo*, the two lions stood suddenly stock-still to listen. From not far off there came the sound of the whinnying of zebras; and after the lions' ears had pointed backwards and forwards a few times to make certain where the game could be, both of them trotted off hastily in a slanting direction back to the *korongo*. Their sharp hearing discovered very soon that the zebras must be close to the bank of the sloot. Instead of taking the shortest path round the mountain to the plain, the lions chose the sloot, which with its shrubs and windings might offer them a good chance of surprising the game. For another moment the two long shapes, moving so noiselessly, could be seen gliding like pale white flecks against the dark foliage of the bank, and then disappeared quickly under it.

And there, under the widespreading old acacia, throwing its shadow far over the rhinoceros and the lions, the stillness was suddenly broken by the noisy grunting of the three cubs, who could no longer be restrained.

Tired out by his long vigil, and convinced at last of its futility, the young lion gave vent for the first

time to his feelings in passionate roars. Attracted by the peculiar tones of his voice the two old lions went up to him, while the lioness went to lie down next to the rhinoceros, and with caressing purrs attempted to allay the impatience and thirst of the three youngsters. The roars of the young lion and the blood of the dead lioness made an extraordinary impression upon the two old ones. At first they uttered a hoarse, short roar something like the bellow of an ox at the spot where a comrade has been slaughtered; then suddenly, wildly, impetuously, they burst out roaring as they had never roared before. Incited to a kind of frenzy almost, the younger one joined in time after time passionately, letting his voice peal forth rough and hoarse with rage, high above the others. It was at one and the same time a poignant lamentation, an expression of savage revenge, and a defiant challenge to the hated disturbers of their peace who were persecuting them like this.

At last the young lion's rage was exhausted, and he came slowly nearer to still his hunger before dawn, for the moon was already gliding behind the dark tree-tops on the mountain, and in an hour it would be day. While he was seeking to tear a few pieces of flesh out of the cavity, which now extended far into the intestines, the two old lions went sniffing along under the trees in the neighbourhood to see if anything of the enemy could be discovered. In the rapidly advancing dawn the two pale figures glided in and out among the low, isolated bushes growing in that open spot, and

disappeared at last into the little sloot under some dark trees. Here, under a bush, they found the spot which the hunters had occupied the night before. At this discovery the hair on neck and back of the two lions began to bristle. Although uneasy, they went on farther, sniffing cautiously all the time, for the darkness lent them courage and their anger had not yet cooled. Oh, if only they could meet those hated human beings here in the night on an equal footing !

But, except the half-obliterated scent, there was nothing that betrayed the hunters' presence ; and although they listened intently, no sound broke the mysterious silence of the last hour of the night.

Then the two old fellows appeared again in the open, standing still for a little while to listen for the first rustle of the morning breeze in the leaves. Their unfailing sagacity told them that day was approaching, and they decided that it was time to retire. Growling sulkily at the thought of the treacherous enemy, who forced them to take flight at so early an hour, old Maanhaar returned to the shelter of the acacia. They had, in fact, just disappeared in the undergrowth with the lioness and her cubs, over the bank of the sloot, when up in the mountain a little bird began its song as clear and as tremulous as the dewdrops that surrounded her—a song of welcome to the first beams of day.

They went to lie a little higher up in the drift-sand to wait for the young lion, who, evidently very

hungry, was still feeding in spite of yesterday's warning. While Maanhaar and his mate stretched themselves lazily and rolled in the sand, yawning and purring in luxurious enjoyment, and the three little ones, too indolent to romp, lay on their bellies looking on with eyes full of mischief, Kraagmannetjie climbed up the bank and threw himself down in the grass. Silently he stared for a moment at the crimson in the east, then fixed his gaze upon the acacia. The thought that his young companion was still there filled him with the greatest anxiety. Rather excitedly he kept moving his forepaws, as with strained attention he tried to pierce the dusk under the trees beyond the acacia. It seemed as though he firmly believed that his enemies would appear somewhere there, and at last give him an opportunity to discover their hiding-place.

Then down in the slood Maanhaar began to roar, and involuntarily Kraagmannetjie joined in. At the first roar of the old leader, the lion beside the rhinoceros lifted his head as if he had suddenly been reminded very forcibly of his danger, and noticing at the same time that the light around him was increasing rapidly, he glided in a crouching attitude through the grass, over the bank and off into the slood. Lions have no "good angels," but they often play that part to each other, and this morning Maanhaar had without doubt saved the life of the young lion without either of them being aware of the fact.

Did Kraagmannetjie, sitting up there looking



on so intently, know more about it? He had just fixed his eyes upon a spot about forty yards away upon the bank near to the acacia, where he espied some gentle movement in the grass. The huge heavy head dropped down instinctively, until only the dark brown tuft over the forehead and the pointed black-edged ears showed above the grass. Yet far too much for the keen eye of a hunter. The next moment a bullet whistled through this tuft, sending a cold shiver down his spine.

"Grrrraaau!" The old lion sprang up and turned—no, he would not run away. With curved tail and flattened ears he stepped to the edge of the bank. The fright which the shot gave him roused his anger, and he recklessly risked his life.

Before the echoes of the shot died away in the mountains, Maanhaar with his mate and the cubs were rapidly on their way to the *krans*. But when a second bullet cut sharply through the twigs overhead, the old leader sprang forward, then stopped with a roar, for the same bullet had penetrated the entrails of the imprudent Kraagmannetjie, causing him to utter roars of rage and pain.

Back into the open sprang the wounded lion. Roaring and rushing round he snapped at his side, imagining that the cause of that stinging pain must still be there in the wound. But when another bullet pierced his breast he sprang savagely into the air, stood for a moment upon his hind legs, clutching wildly in space with his claws as he uttered hoarse, abrupt roars, then rushed towards the spot

where he believed his invisible foe lurked. But he entirely lost his bearing, for the blood streaming through nose and mouth dimmed his eyes. And when with a groan of despair he sank down upon the brink of the little slood leading into the *korongo*, he could hardly drag his body, now flecked with blood and with froth, over the bank into a clump of rank tambouki grass.

Here he lay stretched out on his belly. Convulsively his claws worried the soil as if they would grasp the enemy, who remained so invisible, and with a grinding noise he fastened his teeth upon grass-stems, dead twigs—anything, in fact, that he could find to gnaw. His head sank forward, and with a painful hiccough he began to vomit blood and pieces of flesh. He was not too far gone, however, to raise his head as he heard a strange noise on the bank—the voice of man !

For the last time the old lion gave his menacing war-cry. But he forgot that his back was paralysed, and the spring that should have descended upon his hated pursuers did not bring him farther than against the bank. Yet another despairing attempt, and he got to the top of it. Three yards—only another three yards—and he would have them. Ah, if only he could spring ! But his hind-quarters, destroyed by that first bullet, weigh him down, and before he is able to rise to his feet again a deadly blow crashes through his head. Without a sound he sinks to the ground—without even the usual death-rattle of a dying lion.

But the tough old lion is not dead yet, for when

two upright figures appear before him, he raises once more with difficulty his benumbed old head to gaze at them with glazed eyes. Those once mighty muscles are powerless, and it is in vain that his paralysed brain tries to explain the connection



between himself and these mysterious beings. Despite the rising sun, all grows dark before his eyes : never again will the picture of the plain be reflected within them !

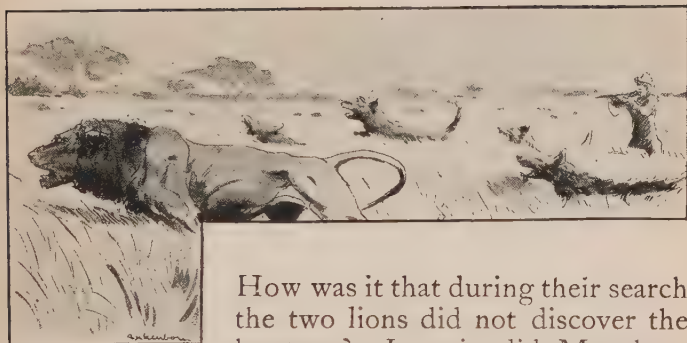
What was there in the glance, usually so untamable, of this beast of prey ? Was it simply that impression of utter impotence which a dying

warrior's plight always conveys to the onlooker? Whatever it was, it made one of the hunters turn his face away and the other quickly level his gun. . . .

Old Kraagmannetjie will never rise again !



## CHAPTER VI



How was it that during their search the two lions did not discover the hunters? In vain did Maanhaar ask himself this question, when a few moments later he stood upon the rocks and saw the two hunters disappearing in the distance in a fold of the mountain. He little knew that two or three times he had passed along only a few feet from the barrels of their guns. The hunters had, in fact, passed the night up in a tree, where they could not easily be scented and where they could observe the lion's every movement. It had never entered old Maanhaar's head to search for the men in the branches among the vultures. From past experience he had already learnt a good deal of the singular and extraordinary artifices of the white man, but hitherto he had come upon him only on the ground. Had they not thoroughly sniffed about the whole locality! "Inexplicable!" That was the one word expressed by the old leader's uneasy attitude.

That both of the lions were not shot that night

was entirely due to the fact that the two hunters belonged to that small number who look upon it as a disgrace to shoot at a lion from a tree, or any other similar place of safety, when the lion has no chance whatever of defending himself. The fact that he has to kill from a distance a fighter like the lion, is in itself enough to give every manly hunter and true sportsman a feeling of regret—one had almost said shame. Does not he, who hides himself like a coward in a tree, deserve our contempt just as much as the assassin who stabs his victim in the back? Should not the lion, the proud ruler of the animal world, who to the very inmost fibre of his being is one of Nature's most perfect and most noble creatures, appeal to that sense of chivalry which man claims so eagerly as one of his own virtues? Of course one is naturally not speaking now of the cattle-farmer, who perforce must proceed against the lion as he would against any other robber; but only of the hunter, who tracks the lion far into the wilds, in his own kingdom, for the pleasure of saying: "I have killed a lion!" Whosoever calls himself a hunter knows, too, that he does not hunt the lion for profit, but because of the charm which a challenge to danger has had for man through all the ages. The lion attracts him just because he is so formidable a fighter; but—and in this the greater number of our present-day hunters are to blame—he does not remember, as an honourable fighter against his savage opponent, to abide by rules, the neglect of which would be considered among his own species to be a disgrace;



and he makes use of all the cunning which his higher development places at his command.

What a pity it is that so many people, and even hunters, see no more in a lion than a bloodthirsty beast of prey, who must be destroyed no matter how ; and even do not scruple to deliver him over to the tortures of strychnine ! No ! this courageous warrior deserves a nobler death—because he exhibits a trait in his attacks which in man would be called chivalry. How many hunters have noticed that the lion never attacks without first uttering his warning battle-cry ? When on quest he overpowers his prize without warning, and uses tricks of cunning. These are the gifts confided to him by mother Nature against his fleet-footed prey. But if ever he has to deal with a pursuer and adopt the rôle of warrior, he exhibits all those qualities which among men we most admire.

Is it laughable to write like this of an animal ? Then you have seen them only at a distance. Then you have never made the discovery that in each of these wild creatures in whom you find such an attractive mark for your gun, and after a well-delivered shot pick up as so much dead meat, in each of them there exists a delicate organic life, a personality, just as interesting in its way as that of man. Then if you as a hunter resort to poison, traps, or safe hiding-places, have you never thought that by adopting such methods you have not even the right to so noble a name as a “ beast of prey ” ?

Go on hunting the lion ! Judgment is not being passed. But show that you are man enough

to meet him on an equal footing, and challenge him to fight. That is the least every hunter can do to reduce the odds of battle. Are you aware of no feeling other than fear when you see how the king of the wilderness claws the air in his death agony, seeking in vain for his invisible foe, or in his despair convulsively buries his fangs deep into his own wound?

Well, so the hunters waited for daylight. The young lion got to the slood in good time, and perhaps on this occasion the hunters would have gone away disappointed, but, unfortunately for himself, Kraagmannetjie had by his roars betrayed to the practised ear of the enemy that he was not yet safely in the slood. To creep along the bank in the high grass to within forty yards was the work of a moment; and the number of our little company of lions was reduced by yet another.

Motionless, old Maanhaar sat up there among the rocks, gazing until the hunters disappeared in the distance. His eye restlessly searched the undergrowth. The men had gone, but what had become of the two other lions? Down there everything was as silent as death, and the old leader had only too good reason to be anxious.

Already the sun had risen above the farthest ridges, and here and there on the slopes gay little green flecks of sunshine intermingled with the dark shadows still hanging over the kloofs and hollows. A motley crowd of vultures and marabouts, swirling about in the air, dropped lower and lower down to the acacia and began at last to settle, one by one,

upon the dead rhinoceros. But still there was no sign of the two lions.

When the last couple of *aasvoëls*, circling about the *krans*, swept by with a teasing buzzing of wings right under the old lion's nose, he could stand it no longer and uttered again and again a deep, low call. After a moment's silence there came a dull answer from one of the runnels over there. It was the young lion who, in his haste when the first shot fell, sought the nearest hiding-place, the little sloot which he and his mate had formerly inhabited. And after the leader upon the *krans* had uttered a few pacifying grunts—"uuuumppf"—the young lion warily came in sight in the sand of the river-bed. As soon as he saw Maanhaar exposing himself so carelessly upon the rock, he became more at ease and advanced towards him.

Satisfying himself with a single glance over the ridge towards the scene near the acacia, he walked to the rear and crept under the branches of the fig tree. He was tired and listless after his vigil of nearly twenty-four hours. The restlessness which apparently still troubled old Maanhaar made no impression on him that morning, and after a bit he fell asleep in his shelter.

Old Maanhaar remained there alone in the sunshine on his rock. But he had no peace. Several times he walked to his mate lying with her cubs in the shade of an overhanging rock, as if he would seek her advice ; but each time he returned to look out once again. He missed Kraagmannetjie. The two of them had passed so many years together

in their untamed existence, sharing all their varying adventures, that there seemed to be something wrong when his old companion was not beside him. As the young lion had remained behind alone with the rhinoceros, and had not left directly after the firing, Maanhaar at first thought that it was he who had come in conflict with the hunters. His reappearance, however, removed all doubt ; and now the old lion knew for certain what the voice had led him to surmise, that it was his old comrade who had roared so in his hour of need. And to think, for fear of braving those firearms in the open veld, he had had to leave him in the lurch !

The lioness, who was half-asleep, but could not entirely abandon herself to rest, looked on with sleepy eyes at the peculiar behaviour of Maanhaar. She wondered whether it were worth while to awaken her cubs, now lying stretched out across her so comfortably asleep, and seek the more sheltered lair of the day before, especially as Maanhaar still seemed to think it necessary to keep watch, and she would rather not let him out of her sight. It was not without astonishment she at length saw the old leader step down from the *krans* and disappear into the *korongo*.

The rhinoceros was covered with a crowd of greedy, quarrelling *aasvoëls* ; many of them were still perched in the trees round about ; and at one side, on some bare level ground between the two sloods, a few marabouts were walking up and down in their stately fashion, too exclusive, or perhaps too frightened, to mix with those swarming gluttons.

There could be no danger, thought Maanhaar, as cautiously he came to the bank where he had last seen Kraagmannetjie. In other circumstances the disgusting rabble would have enticed him to an angry onslaught, but now his whole attention was concentrated upon something else : he had discovered the blood spoor of Kraagmannetjie.

Step by step, his mane rising higher and higher, the old lion followed the spoor, sniffing at each drop of blood which had followed upon the first shot. Soon he came upon larger splashes, where red foam lay on the grass, the result of the wound Kraagmannetjie had received in the lung. Here he looked up savagely in the direction where the hunters had disappeared, and a dull rumbling issuing from his breast like the bass note of an organ was the first sign of the storm rising within. Then a few paces farther old Maanhaar saw with consternation the blood-flecked body of his old companion.

What were the innermost feelings of the savage animal at that sight ? Had he looked upon Kraagmannetjie only as a handy help when on quest ?

One thing is certain. When a moment later he became aware of the voices of men near-by, the idea of flight at first did not occur to him. A quick glance told him that the two hunters and a few Kafirs were making straight for Kraagmannetjie, and were already only a hundred yards away. At the first noise the old lion's body quickly shrank together, and instinctively he bent low as he stood for a moment undecidedly behind Kraagmannetjie's

body. Their numbers were overwhelming, and he himself was standing in an open spot between two sloots without any cover.

The hunters, who came to superintend the flaying of Kraagmannetjie's magnificent skin and to make other preparations for the reception of the remaining lions that night, looked up in astonishment when their dogs suddenly made a rush. In feverish haste they slung their guns off their shoulders. There, just in front of them, on the bare ground beyond the little sloot, stood the mighty, heavily maned old lion, whose death on the first night they had determined on when his deep voice had caused the oxen to stampede in the kraal and given them an idea of his fearful size.

A shot at this short distance would mean certain death, and already both barrels were directed at him. To traverse unhurt the thirty yards of open veld which separated him from the *korongo* and safety, was almost impossible ; and it was fortunate for him that he did not think of hurriedly fleeing even when the dogs made a rush at him and the hunters were so close by. In that short moment of hesitation he had given the dogs an opportunity to surround him, and by the time the hunters raised their weapons it was not possible any longer to shoot without danger to the dogs.

For a moment the scene around the dead rhinoceros was one of the wildest confusion. The replete vultures fluttered and scrambled over each other in their terror to escape from the noisy battlefield into which this corner of the mountains,



generally so quiet at this hour, had been so suddenly converted ; and above that seething mass of jumping, climbing creatures, filling the air with the noise of their heavily flapping wings, the barking of the angry dogs and the deep rumbling of Maanhaar's menacing voice were indeed to be heard, but their forms could hardly be distinguished from the struggling birds around them.

When the ground was clear again the hunters saw the enraged lion with bent back and flattened ears making for the *korongo*, surrounded by the maddened pack of dogs, following him step by step, getting more and more excited now that they imagined the terrible monster was afraid. However, none of them ventured to come too near, and Maanhaar took no more notice of his teasing pursuers than now and then to hit out with his forepaw at one or other of them, grown too bold, while swishing his tail convulsively from side to side and uttering angry growls. He was compelled to beat this retreat. His deep-rooted fear of firearms and the unfavourable country drove him to it. But there was no trace of fear in his attitude ; rather one of daring and defiance, inciting him to get to grips with his enemy.

The hunters had by this time got through the slood and reappeared on the bank beside Kraagmannetjie, standing still in admiration for a second. Never had wounded pride exhibited itself to them in a grander way than in the enraged creature. But such courage must necessarily strengthen still more the hunters' desire for conquest, and when Maan-

haar jumped down from the bank safely into the slood, it was only the dense throng of dogs which this time warded off the bullets.

With renewed zeal the dogs jumped after him into the undergrowth, while the hunters rushed to the brink in the hope that the lion would flee up the slood, in which case he would be obliged to expose himself in the open, sandy spot where on that other day they had encountered the rhinoceros.

If the hunters bore that opening in mind, surely no less did Maanhaar, he who had so long known every little corner of his hunting-ground. As soon as he had descended the bank and was hidden from sight, he trotted quickly through the shrubs, knowing full well that he would have to cross that open space ere he could reach a safe shelter and join the other lions.

And it was here that the dogs were badly taken in. The lion was now in full flight—of that they had no doubt at all and, led by a huge black dog, they eagerly followed him under the branches and out on to the sand. As the hunters came to the brink they were just in time to hear the noise of the lion's onslaught and see how, on the farther side of the sand-spit he suddenly turned to make a rush at his harrying pursuers. Yelping and howling they scattered in every direction. But the black dog had ventured too far. In his haste to get out of the way he jumped against one of the others, and before he had recovered his equilibrium an overwhelming weight fell upon him, and he felt Maanhaar's sharp claws in every part of his body.

Sorrowfully and with horror the hunters watched their black dog, the leader and pick of the whole pack, being mangled to death between the forepaws of the enraged lion. For a moment his despairing howls rang out above the nervous barking of the other dogs, who had again encircled the lion and his victim. For one moment only, and then the fearful fangs were fastened in his throat.

Just one bite, and then with contempt Maanhaar threw aside the dead dog. Full of revenge, he was anxious to get at the other dogs, but in deadly fear they fled away between the banks of the sloot; so when the first shot fell and singed the skin of his shoulder, he disappeared with two huge bounds into the undergrowth. The hunters had already discovered what a difficult task it was to track him in the network of runnels. Besides, the loss of one fine dog was quite enough for that day.

Nothing more was needed to convince Maanhaar that his indispensable comrade, old Kraagmannetjie, was dead; and slowly he crept along the little path up to the *krans*. From there he watched the men delaying for a few minutes beside the dead lion, then at last they made off to their camping place on the plain.

This was the third one of his retinue to be killed by the hunters; but the persecution still went on. Some day, some day there must be a day of reckoning! The possibility of at last being able to take his revenge did not now seem so very far off, for had not the men's first sacrifice already fallen!

With some such thought the tormented old lion

turned away and crept in under the bush beside the other lions.

Down below there the vultures, who from their heights had observed the departure of the men,



Fallen majesty.

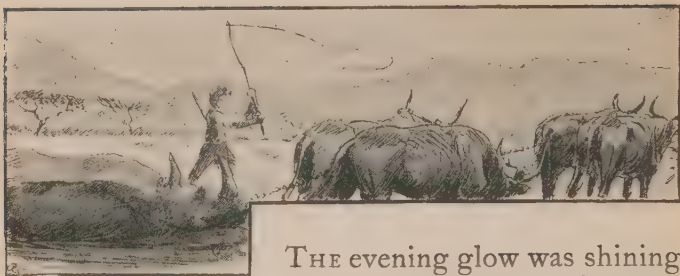
were again circling black above the acacia. A couple of marabouts had already settled beside the dead lion, and after walking cautiously round him a few times to assure themselves that he was really dead, one of them ventured to peck with outstretched neck at the tip of his tail. In the dead carcass they

still recognised the lion, and the awe they had felt for years could not disappear all at once, nor had the friendship between them ever been mutual.

The marabouts did not long remain alone beside the lion. They were soon dispersed by a crowd of restless gluttons which swooped down from the sky and attacked this new prize with far less hesitation. Every lion, after providing the *aasvoëls* from his leavings for so many years, is at the last fated to provide them with yet one more meal—himself.



## CHAPTER VII



THE evening glow was shining on the mountains before the first lion showed himself on the *krans*, now definitely chosen as their lair and natural stronghold. The last gleams of daylight were burning on the lake, and the mountain was glowing in that wonderful purple which sometimes leaves the traveller in tropical Africa in speechless ecstasy and awe before the great calm of the wilderness.

For but a moment the young lion stood there—for it was he who had come out on to the top of the rock—with the crimson sheen of the sun in his magnificent silver-grey mane and so much unconstrained majesty in his bearing that even a callous hunter would have hesitated to shoot him down ; then he lay stretched out on all fours and remained gazing at the plain.

One after the other the lioness and the cubs and at last also old Maanhaar came out on to the stones. After looking about him for a bit he followed the young lion's example, while the lioness sat straight up, moody and cross with her cubs, who had awakened too early and had so repeatedly hurt her



wounded hind foot in their play that she was compelled to get up and move away, for her growls and even an occasional box on the ears did not quell the unconcerned and playful youngsters. But now when they were in the open and had a larger playground, they suddenly had a freak to imitate the big lions ; and although the three little creatures, looking down so daringly from their carefully chosen ledges, were still quite small, the true lion-like bearing was plainly to be discerned in them. Born to rule as they were, they already bore the seal of old Maanhaar and of their long array of ancestors, who in him had reached the acme of perfection. It was already quite easy to be seen which of the three would be Maanhaar's successor. Just look at him : that stout little fellow to the right who always gets the upper hand in all their games ; who even now considers it is time to drag the other two from their position. Will all of them reach maturity ? The lives of all wild animals are uncertain, and almost always end in violence and tragedy. With one and all of them it is merely a question of how long they will be able to evade their enemies ; and the lion, who formerly as sovereign rose above the disasters that usually befell the other creatures, now finds himself threatened daily with a similar fate. The days when wild animals could still die of old age are gone for ever, for man, although his advent seems to have been fatal to the lion, has not proved to be a protector of the weaker game.

Meanwhile let the little lion cubs play—for them the seriousness of life has not yet begun.

The lioness, soothed in spite of herself at the sight of their playful wrangling, forgot her pain and stretched out her limbs contentedly. Maanhaar also changed his wakeful attitude and got up to roll in the shallow sand beside her. One could not picture a more lovable scene of family life. Lion cubs do not in the least resemble bloodthirsty beasts of prey, and even the full-grown lions, in the mood they were now in, seemed to be thinking of nothing but to enjoy their mighty strength and love of life.

In the meantime the magic light on the plain had faded, and the mountain-side lay in dim twilight. The highest kopjes of the low range of hills near the lake were bathed for a moment in purple, then softly melted away into their colourless surroundings.

The young lion was hungry. The little meal, which after his long fast beside his dead mate he had been able to get, had not by any means satisfied him, and it was only the fear that the men would repeat their performance of the day before that had driven him off—and only just in time ! For a long while he lay there motionless on his rock, spying the neighbourhood of the rhinoceros and then stood up, certain that not a living creature except the vultures could be there. The vultures, happy in the unexpected abundance which had fallen to their share, had for the time being made this corner of the mountain their home, and could hardly tear themselves away from the rhinoceros to take shelter in the acacia and other trees for the night. Their presence down there, usually so undesirable,

to-night served to put the young lion at his ease. The fact that they were perched so unconcernedly in the trees seemed proof enough that no human beings were hiding under them.

So thought the young lion ; and he determined to make use of the short moment before the moon rose. If he approached up wind and first thoroughly searched the neighbourhood, nothing could happen.

A sleepy pheasant was still to be heard below in the sloop as the lion stole stealthily down the mountain, firmly resolved to venture all. Maanhaar did not take much notice of him as he passed, for he had grown used to the singular behaviour of the young lion since the death of his mate. He himself had no intention of going down just yet. The occurrences of the morning flitted again through his brain, bringing with them various sensations, visibly expressed by his attitude of anxiety, then rage, and at last, as he grew hungry, of indecision.

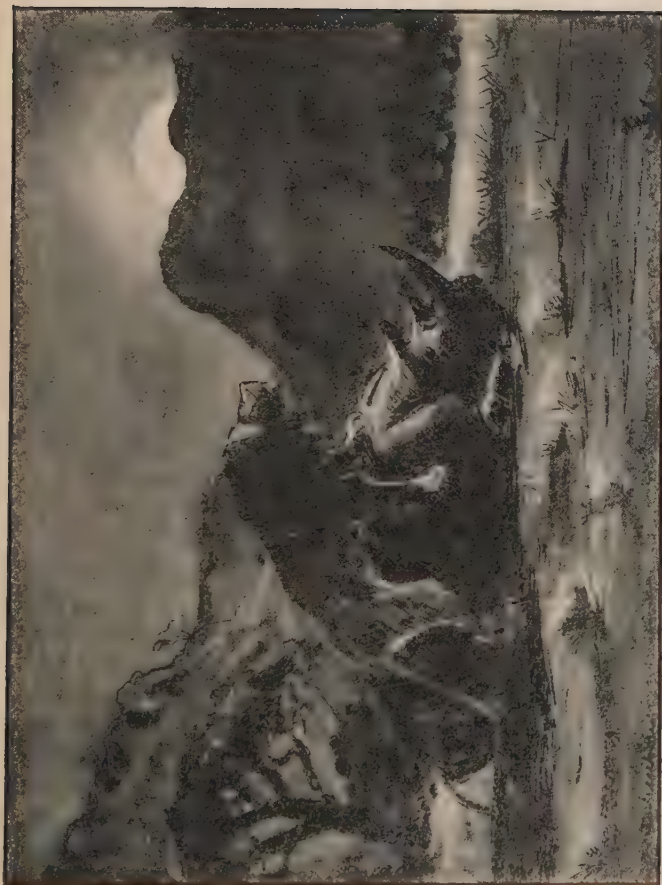
There was a slight noise in the grass, audible in the silence only because the evening breeze was not blowing, and the young lion appeared on the bank, then glided to the shadow cast by the acacia. He stood there suddenly stock-still in utter amazement : the rhinoceros was gone ! Although he had taken every precaution and was fairly certain that the coast was clear, yet this discovery caused him to stop in his tracks for quite a while as if turned to stone, his eyes searching sharply in every direction.

The removal of the body had indeed not taken place without leaving traces. On the contrary, the

spoor was so plainly to be seen that it must have been left on purpose. But the lion's reasoning powers did not go so far as that, and after he had tried in vain to find a solution, he began to follow cautiously along the top of the bank a broad trail which presumably would lead to the dead animal. He realised, of course, that great danger might be lurking here after the events of the last few days—especially as he now saw through the trees the crimson moon rising above the ridges, throwing her first beams over the bushes on the mountain. But a hungry lion will dare much. Making use of all his senses, he continued the search in the shelter of the darkness under the trees.

At a point where its banks are high and steep, the *korongo* takes a sharp bend at about thirty yards from the acacia, and here he found the rhinoceros. All serene! Not even the scent of man was to be perceived. But the inexplicable removal of the rhinoceros—a feat beyond the strength of any lion—filled our young lion with fear and suspicion. Three or four times he glided noiselessly up and down along the trail, then, only half at ease, began to feed on the rhino. Although the vultures had penetrated through the little hole right to the intestines, a great deal of the rhinoceros, protected by the thick hide, remained untouched. But it was difficult to get at the flesh, and after a few fruitless attempts the lion climbed right over the rhino to find a more convenient spot.

At that very moment a wide streak of moonlight fell between the trees upon the rhinoceros, and



The young lion looked up uneasily at the moon.





sharply outlined the pale gleaming form of the lion against the background of shadow. Uneasily he looked up at the light. Thereupon, two flames of fire burst from some dark bushes growing on the edge of the bank about three yards from the rhinoceros, and with a smothered roar the lion bounded up into the air. In vain he tried to escape, and after a short death-rattle, half suffocated by the blood which welled up, he stretched his limbs convulsively and lay still. Both bullets had pierced him to the heart.

Old Maanhaar had good reason to be irresolute. As food, the rhinoceros was becoming far too dangerous. He lay a little while gazing at the full moon rising between the mountains. He knew—none better than he—that it would be daybreak ere she set. And so the rhinoceros could not be approached except in bright moonlight. The safest way out—and this he had already thought of—was to forsake this corner of the mountain and seek new hunting-grounds. Fortunately the cubs were now quite strong enough for that. But if the rhinoceros was to be given up, then another bit of game would soon have to be caught, and this was just the old leader's difficulty. His two mainstays—Kraagmannetjie and his mate—were both dead; and of the young couple only the male remained, but *he* could not be depended upon, even if he could be persuaded to move off immediately. On these bare plains the game was not easily caught, and he knew only too well what it is to go for a week or more without food.

Maanhaar's thoughts had got thus far when the shot fired at the young lion suddenly broke the silence of the night. This dissipated his last doubts. Away now to the open plain, and farewell to this pleasant hunting-ground beside the *korongo*. As a sign that his decision had been made, the old lion stood up and let his mighty roar roll once more over the *krans*, filling the mountain recess with reverberating echoes. His voice rang out like a challenge. Let the enemy know that he was coming—for to-night he would certainly not fall into their toils.

Maanhaar's territory was extensive, and he knew every drinking-place frequented by the game. Besides, the lion is by nature a roamer, and is just as much at home in one spot in the desert as another. And yet the old leader found it hard that night to go away. As he came to the path by which they usually left their lair, and saw the acacia rising up against the sky, the temptation to pay the rhino a last visit grew almost too strong for him. For a moment he hesitated, then he let his voice be heard, twice, thrice, to warn the young lion that something special was on foot, and then walked resolutely on. The last sounds uttered by the young lion had been too weak to be heard from the *krans*, and the old leader did not yet know that his retinue had been reduced to the little family now following so seriously in his spoor as if they knew that something was wrong.

For safety's sake the lions kept to their old hunting-path in the slood, under the banks of which

it was still dusky twilight, and where their footsteps on the sand could not be heard.

They reached the bend just beneath the dark bush and the hostile eyes peeping out of it. Nor was their arrival unobserved, for other ears understood the signs which the young lion was no longer able to comprehend. But the overhanging bank under which they were now gliding stretched its friendly shadow across the lions, and the excited fingers once more slipped off the triggers.

But ten feet away from his deadly enemies, yet the old lion passed on without turning a hair ! Had his sagacity—at other times so infallible—forsaken him that night ? No, on the contrary, his savage instincts had never been more vigilant. But his very best confederate, the night-wind, protector of the children of the wild, had gone to rest with the other comrades and left him in the lurch. Besides, this time it was a case of dealing with most experienced hunters, who had made their preparations with the greatest cunning, and chosen a most suitable place for their ambush. If the evening breeze should rise it would blow from their hiding-place in the dark bush, over the steep banks of the slout, here only a few yards wide, and not betray the hunters' secret to the lions down below. Furthermore, rhinoceros's dung had been strewn in every direction so as entirely to nullify every evidence of the men's recent presence. Early that afternoon, at an hour when every lion is asleep, the rhinoceros had been dragged by oxen close up to the bush on the bank, and before sundown the

hunters had quietly taken up their position. Quite invisible themselves, in the shadows of the black foliage, they could observe every movement of the lions in the moonlight.

However, it was not without good reason that old Maanhaar had become a leader of lions. Convinced that this deathly silence and apparent peace near the rhino were not to be trusted, he conquered his desire for food, and once more led his family along that safe little path.

They had already left the dangerous neighbourhood behind them and reached that spot where the little tributary, after making a short bend round the rhinoceros, rejoined the *korongo*. In between lay the little stretch of grass, the scene of that morning's adventure with the dogs, now brilliantly illuminated by the full moon. At one side the dark acacia was visible, and over there, on the other side, the body of Kraagmannetjie must be lying. But Maanhaar had not got as far as this only to turn back now. For a moment he came to view on the bank, his form so plainly outlined against the dark background of bushes that two pairs of eyes, in spite of the distance of forty yards, involuntarily took sight and aimed at his gleaming body; then suddenly he turned and disappeared with a smothered growl into the slood. A few yards farther on he mounted the bank, meaning to take the path leading round the mountain.

However, it was not to be. Up till now the lioness had followed the old leader in silent confidence, taking all this circumspection to mean



Aschendorf

The last hunt.





nothing but the usual and necessary precaution. Yet when it became clear to her that he intended to enter the open veld, she remained stubbornly on the bank.

It was in vain that he went on farther—repeatedly uttering his call, “uuuuppp”—she remained there. At last he stood still, and she for her part now turned round and invited him to follow her. As soon as she descended the bank and was out of his sight, Maanhaar gave way—in his weakness wonderfully like the rulers of another race—reluctantly returning in answer to her call. He was not exceptional in his behaviour, as among lions it is not seldom the female who takes the lead.

Having to provide for three little ones, it was no wonder that the lioness was hungry and disinclined to relinquish the rhinoceros. This in itself made her choice a quite natural one; but also the facts that she was painfully lame, that the drift-sand in the slood was so pleasantly cool to the injured hind foot, while there in the veld each tuft of grass or shrub made the open wound smart, and, in addition to this, the chance of catching any game in the bright moonlight was very remote—all sufficed to strengthen her resolve. Indeed, Maanhaar himself realised this last fact so well that he soon gave up his opposition.

Haltingly, step by step, growling sulkily now and then, he followed his mate who, having descended the bank, was once more in the little slood, spying the land from the side opposite to the rhino. For, despite her foolish resolve, she yet

remained the experienced lioness and anxious mother.

Keeping to the little slood, until they got back into the *korongo*, and then returning on their spoor to the acacia, the lions entirely encircled the opening where the rhinoceros lay, and sniffed the air from every side. They concluded that if danger lurked anywhere it must be farther away. Nevertheless, they stood still yet a little while on the bank listening, a silent group—for the cubs also seemed for a moment to be impressed—ere they dared take a decided step. But, having got so far, they seemed to have thrown aside all fear, and were again hungry lions, who would suffer no intruder at their booty.

The cubs began to purr, their mother glided crouchingly under the acacia, and Maanhaar walked into the moonlight straight to the place where that morning Kraagmannetjie had fallen. Although he was hungry, the old lion did not yet by any means think of feeding : he intended to keep watch to-night and obviate every possible surprise. After sniffing with deep growls at the bones, which only yesterday were Kraagmannetjie and were now strewn all about the veld by the vultures, he walked through the little slood and somewhat farther off to the narrow game path along which the hunters came every morning. Here he let his mighty voice reverberate over the plain. All his hidden rage, his unsatisfied desire for revenge, found utterance in those passionate roars.

After a thorough search into any undergrowth possible for a man to hide in, he returned, convinced

that the hunters must be somewhere in the direction of the plain. A visit to the dead dog, lying not far from Kraagmannetjie's skeleton, gave rise to renewed roars. This was the first loss he had inflicted on the hunters, and remembrance of it aroused a desire for others. Those hoarse, sharp last notes repeated so bloodthirstily were not to be misunderstood : " Woe to the man who—to-night—comes within my reach ! "

Meanwhile the lioness had followed the trail to within about ten yards of the rhinoceros, where with flattened ears she now remained growling. The same surmises which had troubled the unfortunate young lion at his arrival arose in her, and her growls were meant to frighten away any enemy, possibly hiding in the neighbourhood of the bait, as well as to warn her cubs that they must not come any nearer. Bluff is one of the lion's strongest weapons, and one which he often uses with success, even against stronger opponents like the rhinoceros and the buffalo, whom he does not care to attack. That it, however, does not remain bluff in the case of a lioness with cubs, no one knew better than the two men there in the dark bush, anxiously awaiting that moment in which the lioness should turn her body sideways, so that they could make certain of the first shot.

Over there in the high grass, a few yards from the rhinoceros and half in the shadow of a yellow-wood tree, lay the young lion still in the almost life-like attitude which he had assumed in his death-struggle. His head had fallen forward on his

paws and his teeth were bitten into the ground, but otherwise there was no sign of violence, and the rays of moonlight filtering through the branches revealed not a stain in his gleaming mane. Lying there like that he might have been merely asleep, and the lioness, who had not heard that single shot during her slumbers, did not know what to think of it all. His presence would ordinarily have been a quietening sign—but this unnatural, mysterious stillness?

With continual growls, which sounded malicious and menacing enough to make other hearts in the neighbourhood quail, and even by using her forepaws the lioness scarcely managed to restrain her excited cubs and keep them for a little while longer from the rhinoceros. He who has an ear for the wilderness would have noticed in the gruff voice a suppliant undertone which in a touching way expressed her motherly love and care—touching because gentleness is the more remarkable when allied to so much savagery. It was easy to guess how much violence that punishing forepaw was employing as the little ones grew more and more obstreperous and noisy, just like any little kittens or puppies.

At last the lioness gave in, but she approached in a creeping attitude, her face stiffly directed to that dark little bush on the bank—the only dense hiding-place in the immediate neighbourhood of the rhino. Instinctively she felt that it would be safer to keep the dead beast between herself and the bush. In this she was right, for at that

instant only the huge carcass of the forest giant stood between her and death.

So far all went well, but she did not yet feel quite at ease, and for a good while lay growling behind the rhino without eating, and at the least flutter of the leaves or grass she jumped up, suddenly erect, angrily grumbling. At last, as nothing occurred, and the cubs with characteristic inquisitiveness were sniffing unhindered near the bush and the motionless lion there, her fear diminished and she began to eat.

The roaring of Maanhaar watching over the safety of his family gave her courage.

## CHAPTER VIII



THE cubs were satiated, and their gambols showed that they were more concerned with the strangeness of such a feast than with the opportunity for feeding it offered. Nevertheless, each bit of flesh had to be fought over until it was covered in dust and then thrown aside as worthless. In their play two of them rolled over and over right up to the bush, within reach of the hands only too eager to seize them were it not for the formidable protectress, there behind the rhinoceros, who at the least idea of danger to her young ones would change from a gentle mother to an enraged monster. The frightened "miaau" of the weakest little one, the delicate one of the three, who was being smothered and cried for help, was enough to bring her growling to her feet to seek the cause. Ah ! if she had but discovered the dark secret of that little bush !

The objects of all this care continued their games with implicit faith in her, who had never left them in the lurch, and quite unconscious of the



danger lurking over them—unconscious, too, of the fact that it was just their presence that furnished the greatest reason why the lioness should be got rid of. Had the little one had more experience of the enemy she would have been able to give the necessary warning that night, for when she got up from the sand and returned to the rhinoceros with her proud little brother, she suddenly turned her head and stared long and intently at the dark leaves. Had she heard whispering, or seen the glint of an eye in the mysterious darkness? Both possibly, for her black muzzle and inquisitive eyes were separated from the face of one of the hunters by no more than a thin curtain of leaves. If she had had the boldness of her brother, she would perhaps have made further search and certain discovery; but she was accustomed to leave such things to her mother, and believed firmly that certain things were best left alone. Besides, there was really nothing more to be seen, and once she had turned her eyes back to the rhinoceros and the other two cubs, the little bush with its secret was forgotten.

Her conqueror in his overweening confidence was making a presumptuous attack on a bare rib sticking out of the side of the rhinoceros, and was pulling it violently backwards and forwards. Here was something that required concerted effort, and the little cub hurried away to help—until the bone should be dislodged, after which the one would naturally ask the other to keep at a distance.

The third cub, the future successor to Maanhaar,

began to be bored with walking up and down over the rhinoceros, and as he could eat no more, went to lie in front of his mother on her outstretched forepaws, teasing her by continually snatching away each bit of flesh she tore off with such difficulty. She allowed him to take the first piece, but at the second she began to resist, and at last protested growlingly. It was a pleasant sight to see how the great, cross lioness with that rough, awe-inspiring voice of hers was tormented and bothered by her teasing youngster, and was repeatedly compelled to surrender. No one but the little beggar himself would have believed that any strength lay hidden in those little paws, kicking and straining, and those teeth tugging and tearing the flesh to pieces. And so he went on playfully wrestling there with his head near those dangerous jaws, not only unharmed, but being even begged to desist.

While thus amusing himself, he suddenly made the discovery that it was possible to get through the opening right into the rhinoceros. What could be hiding in that dark cavity? For a moment he peeped with outstretched neck into the hole, then putting a clumsy blood-besmeared forepaw on the edge, ventured his whole body inside it. The *aasvoëls* had been there before him, having torn out and consumed all the intestines, and far in front of him he saw the light glimmering through. So there should be a way out there, thought he, and bravely he entered the dark passage. In fact, the vultures had made a new entrance where the hunters that morning had cut the hide away for

the lions, right into the breast cavity, and so the little cub reappeared after a moment at the throat of the rhinoceros, much to his astonishment, but no less self-congratulation. It was a very grimy but completely happy little fellow who, extending his chest, gazed along the entire length of the rhinoceros towards the mother he had left over there.

Despite all their efforts the other two could not loosen that rib bone. And as they were beginning to be rather bored with it, when their little leader made his appearance above them suddenly to disappear again into the rhinoceros, both of them followed after him. Where his sturdy little body could enter they would not be turned back. And when the lioness, hearing the row inside there, withdrew her head, she saw the three cubs tumbling out helter-skelter.

Here at all events was something to keep them busy for quite a while. It was hardly possible that things would go on inside there for any length of time without squabbling ; and after a bit the smallest of them came out at the neck, and ran to the other opening a good deal quicker than one need do at any ordinary game of hide-and-seek. Her brother, the discoverer, soon followed on her heels, and both of them rolled over their mother, then clambered back into the rhino, quite unconscious that it was they who caused the lioness suddenly to give a roar of pain and lift her hind foot to lick it.

After a while the youngsters quietened down and finally disappeared from the scene, and only

the gnawing of the lioness, tearing her food with difficulty from the tough hide, was heard above the silence. Whether the cubs had discovered that the bits of liver inside were softer and sweeter than the tough, stringy flesh they had already devoured, or if they had grown sleepy and wished to take this unique chance of sleeping inside a rhino, is difficult to say, for in their dark cave they were sufficiently well hidden from view.

Old Maanhaar had undertaken his task with astounding self-denial. An hour had passed since he began his grim duty of sentinel, and he had not gone nearer to the rhinoceros than was necessary to assure himself that all was going on well there. At intervals he again began to roar, now near to the patch of grass where his mate could see him, then farther off in the little game path, or deep in the bed of the *korongo*. But even when silent his watchfulness was not relaxed for an instant, as was plainly to be discerned from the fact that his roars were continually being uttered from fresh places. As he was turning from the *korongo* into the tributary slood and going round a dark bush a little farther along, he suddenly came upon the rhinoceros, who for the hundredth time had left the forests on the mountain-summit to seek his mate. Astonishment was great on both sides, for on the soft, damp sand of the river bed the india-rubber-like soles of the rhino's feet made almost as little noise as the lion's, which indeed did not make any at all. A loud snort and an abrupt, menacing roar suddenly and simultaneously rent

the silence. Then the rhinoceros rushed over the spot where a moment before Maanhaar had stood, burst right through the undergrowth and tambouki grass towards the *korongo*, where an instant later the swishing branches closed behind him.

Whether the cubs had been asleep or not, it was with undisguised astonishment that at each end of the rhinoceros appeared a round little head with frightened eyes, for at the same time as the row in the slood they had heard the lioness's threatening cry of alarm, and could only conclude that the snorting monster was making straight for them. But once out in the moonlight, where all seemed as peaceful as ever, they like true little lions looked upon the sudden flight of the rhinoceros as something quite natural.

In one bound Maanhaar had reached the top of the bank, where he remained growlingly watching the rhino's characteristic way of giving vent to his terror in a savage but foolish onslaught. When the last sounds from the slood had died away, the old lion stretched himself out on his paws in the little path with his face turned towards the plain, whence apparently more visitors were approaching—hyenas this time, who came howling from afar at the sound of Maanhaar's roars, having hunted in vain off their own bat, night after night.

The whirlwind of the rhinoceros's flight brought a feeling of relief to the lions. After such a storm the neighbourhood seemed fresher.

More at ease now that the path had been swept clean by so mighty a comrade—even if not exactly

a friend—the lioness at last left her shelter to seek a better spot at which to feed. Again her eyes fell on that motionless form under the tree, and again suddenly those doubts arose which had troubled her all night, repeatedly interrupting her feeding ; and she decided to make an end to her uncertainty. To get to the dead lion she had to pass the bush on the bank, and as she walked round the rhinoceros, turning in the narrow passage, the white moonlight fell upon her right flank.

Traitorous night wind ! To sleep now when one of the children of the wild so needs you ! The merest flutter, less even than were needed to move a leaf, and the ruthless guns, now not more than three feet away, would yet have missed their prey.

With terrific suddenness the double report broke the stillness of the night, followed immediately by a terrifying cry of agony, which expressed not only her own pain but that of the mother-lion who realises she must lose her cubs. With frightful roars, now plaintively entreating, now savage and menacing, the lioness made vain attempts to rise. Next to the dead lion, where with a mighty bound she had plunged to the ground, she lay moaning, while the three cubs, quite stupid with fear, sat round about.

“ Grrr—— ! grrr—— ! grrr—— ” Old Maanhaar with short, rapid bounds, uttering hoarse, half-smothered roars, came raging along. With shaggy mane stiffly on end and eyes like flaming coals he halted before the rhinoceros and gazed wildly about him.



Not an enemy to be seen ! The enraged old lion was beside himself. All the suppressed fury of these many days seethed in his savage breast. Oh, to get hold of the enemy and to tear him to tatters !

Now the lioness, who had been lying still a little while gasping for breath, began to struggle in her death-throes, uttering moans of exhaustion. This was too much for Maanhaar. As his eye fell on the young lion lying there near her apparently so calm and composed, his rage took an unexpected turn. With a mighty spring he is on the dead lion, seizes him by the back of the neck and shakes him violently from side to side like a cat does a mouse. Suddenly this mad rage seemed to desert him, as if he had become conscious of his insensate folly, and the lifeless carcass dropped from his jaws.

Had he become aware of the smell of powder, and immediately concluded that the dark bush would perhaps explain everything ? Quickly he came with long, gliding steps between the rhinoceros and the sloot, nearer to the bush, smelt at it—but too late ! Two jets of flame burst again from the leaves, and old Maanhaar, his neck and head penetrated by two deadly bullets, fell backwards. Gurgling sounds issued from his throat through the suffocating blood ; then he lay there still for evermore. At the same moment a long, quivering sound from the lioness's throat also announced her end.

Poor old Maanhaar ; trusty old leader ! He wished to avenge his mate and comrades even at the price of his own life. No thought was there

of flight in the last moment. So near to his foes that the powder had singed his face and mane, yet the old warrior had to succumb without giving vent to a last roar, or even the lament of a dying lion !

And what of the cubs ? Helpless and utterly nonplussed they sat there : the sturdy little one on top of the rhino, the other two still where their mother stood when that deadly shot rang out—all of them perfectly quiet, except for the round little heads moving from side to side as they looked at each other and at the bush in terror. There under the dense foliage, where a moment before the red flames had burst forth, darkness and silence had returned as suddenly as they had been broken. Not one of them moved even a foot, for the voice which up till now had led them in all their little adventures, was for some inexplicable reason suddenly silenced. Their experiences of the last week were enough to tell them that they were in danger. But what of the grown-up lions ?

For a few minutes there was complete silence. Not the slightest movement was made by the three lions stretched out in the moonlight, and at the first shot the hyenas had immediately lulled their howling to listen intently. It had all happened and passed so quickly, that if they had been human the little cubs would have rubbed their eyes to assure themselves they were not dreaming. Meanwhile there was no sign of the enemy, and the youngsters began to look upon the attack as all over, for to them it had seemed just as sudden and just as harmless as the onslaught of the rhinoceros.

After a little while the one cub mechanically climbed down from the rhinoceros and began to tussle with the rib-bone, shot in two by the last bullet. He little thought that the lead needed to have gone only half a foot higher to have shot him off the rhinoceros. The other two, who were just about to follow the lioness when the first shot had so suddenly rooted them to the ground, seemed also to have come to their senses and began to sniff at the three dead lions one by one. Apparently only half satisfied, they returned at last to sit at the head of the rhino near to their little leader—and to think! “Think” is the only word which describes the expression on their comically serious little faces.

High in the firmament the morning star twinkled. A pale shimmer behind the mountains in the east was already dimming the other stars, and slowly spread farther and farther into the opal tints of dawn. And still the unnatural and mysterious silence near the rhinoceros continued. No lion choir welcomed the new day. Only far down in the slood the last complaining cries of the hyenas were to be heard as they returned, disappointed, to their lairs. On all sides the vultures, having spent a restless night in the trees, were beginning to preen their feathers, and soon from every rock of the mountain slope there came the martial call of pheasants, meeting the day full of joyful expectations—for this year was a good one for the pheasants along the *korongo*.

An inexplicable fear began to overpower the

three cubs. With increasing bewilderment they observed the immobility of the dead lions, and when on every side the day awoke, their terror was only too evident. Once they tried to drink from the lioness, but full of astonishment quickly relinquished the attempt. She was stiff and cold, and remained insensible to all their pleading. They began to understand that there was something very wrong, and, instead of their usual playful purring, now uttered frightened cries as in despair they walked backwards and forwards between the carcasses. For the first time it occurred to them that an early departure was imperative.

It was almost quite light when a fluttering in the bush abruptly revealed to them the secret which Maanhaar had discovered just too late. The cubs were sobered ; quite, quite sobered, as if they felt already that they were left to their own devices. In the twinkling of an eye all three of them sat up behind the lioness, their ears pointed, gazing in painful uncertainty at the dark foliage that hid their terrible foe. However, their trust in her, behind whom they had so often sheltered when danger threatened, was now to be unpleasantly shattered. Did she, at other times so sharp-witted and solicitous, notice nothing of their danger ? The leaves suddenly rustled and two hunters, rejoicing at the expectation of so exceptional a capture, made their appearance and ran quickly towards the cubs. Should they flee without the other lions ? They hesitated but for an instant. Then that instinctive terror which all animals

feel for the strange form of man, took possession of them—a terror all the stronger because of their experiences these last few days and the example shown them by their elders. Terrified, they fled into the undergrowth of the slood.

There under the shrubs they spent a couple of anxious hours. Kafirs came along, and for some time the cubs heard them making a noise as they busied themselves with the dead lions. In painful anxiety they expected that the lions would jump up roaring and drive off their enemies ; but they remained dumb. Then the youngsters began to whimper to let their mother know their whereabouts, but she remained deaf. Over the fallen monarchs of the wild the natives intoned their monotonous song of triumph.

The hunters had not relinquished their plan after the cubs escaped them. To catch his game alive is just as much man's desire as that of any other beast of prey. After the skins had been flayed, all became perfectly quiet on the bank, and the three little creatures, whose cries had been heard and accurately located by the hunters, sat bolt upright in their shelter, listening. A moment later they jumped up in consternation, for they became aware of crackling sounds from several sides, indicating the approach of cautious footsteps. The men were encircling them ! Whither should they flee ? On every side the green leaves were rustling, and here and there black forms became visible between the branches. The cubs, who had spent their short lives in play, care-free under the

protection of the lioness, in whose presence even danger had meant merely a pleasant change, found themselves all at once helpless and in direst straits. The cheeky attitude they had formerly adopted, which used so often to give their experienced mother such uneasy moments, had quite disappeared, and in despair they looked to each other for guidance.

While still undecided, they stood there listening affrightedly as the sounds came nearer and nearer and the shapes of men began to appear on every side. Then it was that the spirit of old Maanhaar awakened in his young successor ! Harkening to a secret prompting within his breast, he hastily made for the *krans*, not forgetting to creep under the densest shrubs and at every few yards to stand still to listen for the footsteps of the men. Under the rank tendrils, growing so thickly over the bushes and leaving just enough space for the cubs to creep through, they remained invisible, their soft, velvety pads making no noise ; whereas the clumsy movements of the enemy could be followed without any difficulty. And when for the third time the little leader stood still, the other two pressing close to him with fear, he perceived that immediate danger had been left behind. Yet everywhere the crackling of twigs and the voices of men were still to be heard. So away to the *krans* as old Maanhaar had taught them !

A few minutes later, quite breathless, they arrived there, hoping to find safety in the old lair.

The stronghold, chosen by Maanhaar that first day, was indeed to become their place of refuge



this time too, for as soon as the hunters observed that they had fled to the mountains, they recognised the impossibility of approaching them unseen. A little while after, the cubs, looking down from their coign of vantage, saw the last of the human figures melt away into the pale grey of the plain. Although at other times this hour of morning would have found them sleepy enough, it was not likely that they would get any rest to-day. Hardly an hour after the men had gone, three tawny little figures appeared suddenly and silently in the sandy bed near the acacia. With an earnestness formerly foreign to their funny little faces, they minutely examined the banks on both sides before they trotted off. When they got to just below the bush and recognised the spot where the three lions should be lying, the very smallest of the cubs could not resist uttering a plaintive cry for its mother. That proved their salvation ! At the sound there was a rustling in the leaves above them—very, very soft, it is true, but the round little ears were sharpened. The savage instinct—that is the birth-right of every wild animal—had been thoroughly roused by the events of the early morning. Three pairs of eyes remained steadily directed above, while the little bodies adopted the set attitude of a lion who scents danger.

And there above them, hiding among the leaves, but plainly visible against the sun, crouched the figures of the two hunters, who had just got ready for a sudden attack. The people the cubs had seen down in the plain were only the Kafirs taking the

skins to camp. But they did not stop to consider the matter. The discovery that their deadly foes were still there—that bush must surely be full of them—was enough, and hastily they sprang back towards the undergrowth—stealthily, too, for they feared that the men would hear them and again surround them.

As soon as they were hidden in the undergrowth and noticed that they were not being followed, they fled no farther, but crept under a dense bush against the bank, so as to be as near as possible to the dead lions. They had not lain there long ere they heard a movement opposite them and, peeping through the branches, saw the two hunters emerge from the bush and remain for a while talking near to the dead lions, then at last disappear from the scene. The hunters had abandoned the search.

But the cubs were not going to venture too soon to mount the bank. The fatal bush was still there near the lions, and who could tell whether the men had really all got out of it? The smallest one began again to “miaau,” and the others, rather more at ease in their shelter, also joined in. For a few minutes they continued to cry to the lions from their hiding-place, alternately growling impatiently or complaining sadly. But slowly their voices grew weaker and weaker, and after a few sleepy, yawning, long-drawn plaintive notes they were silent at last. Sleep, held at bay so long by their excitement, finally overcame the three youngsters.

It was midday, and the sun blazed in a breathless sky. It was not only the cubs who were affected

by the somnolent air: the whole recess of the mountain lay as if every living thing in it had succumbed to sleep under the charm of the noon-day shimmer. Beneath a slanting tree stem, huddled close together, their paws stretched out in every direction or curved above them, our three little cubs lay, in spite of themselves, fast asleep. Now and then one of them would whimper or growl in his dreams.

Already at sunrise the vultures had sailed into the plain in a long black ribbon, and an hour later could be seen circling about a ridge whither, doubtless, the remains of a lion's meal had lured them. The mountain recess had for the moment grown too hot for them, for from their trees they had watched the events of the night, also the shooting that morning; and that dark little bush which the men had left was trusted as little by them as by the lion cubs. Notwithstanding his greediness, the *aasvoël* is very much concerned for his own safety. A few of them were still perched hesitatingly on the trees here and there, loth to leave the food, but at the same time afraid to settle near the undergrowth, where there would not be sufficient time or space for them to rise quickly should a man jump out of it.

Despite the red flesh of those dead lions lying so temptingly near the rhinoceros, they ventured no farther than to stretch their necks to breaking point while staring with envious eyes at the bush. Two marabouts, keeping the cautious attitude of the vultures in mind, walked at a safe distance up

and down in their stately fashion round about the little open space. But as in that way they seemed to be learning very little, they ended by taking up a position in the middle of it where they could bask in the sun, and, raising their shoulders, they prepared for a long vigil. After a while they melted into their surroundings, motionless as two dead tree stumps.

It seemed that yesterday's strife would not be repeated to-day at all events, and nothing further occurring to disturb their rest, the cubs slept on through the day, unconscious of hunters and guns and of the terrible happenings which had driven them to take shelter here. A pheasant came along on the white sand under the vines and shrubs, seeking a cosy dust bath for the midday hours, and the soft rustle of each cautious footstep among the dried leaves could be distinctly followed till almost right up to the cubs. Then there arose a sudden cry—"Kreet!" The dead leaves crackled, a frightened pheasant scrambled from under the twigs, and scuttled over the sandy bed of the *korongo*. He might just as well have stayed, for all the notice the tired, sleepy little lions took of him.

The sun had almost set when the cubs awoke and gradually came to themselves. Tortured by thirst, as they were, their first thoughts were of the lioness, the discovery of whose absence filled them with surprise and then with fear. Their plaintive cries uttered repeatedly in unison clearly showed how vividly the occurrences of the previous day were remembered.

It was not long ere they left their shelter and crossed excitedly and quickly the strip of drift-sand, winding through the undergrowth, and stood under the bank upon which the rhinoceros and the lions were lying. The wind was blowing—blowing hard at last—and their instinct, strengthened by the example of old Maanhaar and his mate, prompted the cubs to make use of its help, so lamentably absent the night before. They trotted down the sloop for a little, then out along the bank to the left, their black muzzles up-wind. The breeze brought them a strong smell of dead rhinoceros, and another which they could not exactly understand. Between two bushes and a strip of high grass they came upon the tree where yesterday the young lion had fallen. Again they stood upon that fatal spot !

The lions were still lying there just as the hunters had left them, untouched by the vultures. But what a change ! The sight called forth renewed cries from the youngsters, who shudderingly sniffed at the dead carcasses one by one. They recognised the lioness without much difficulty, and began nosing her for milk, whimpering distressfully the while. But this cold, wet, bloody body was no more their mother, and after a few vain attempts they sat upright, despondently and dejectedly gazing about them.

Then that instinct which mother Nature, fierce in her benevolence, has implanted in all her creatures, made its appearance in the cubs ; that instinct which divides all animals into pursuer and pursued, which turns man into a cunning beast of prey,

which has made mothers kill their children—the instinct of self-preservation. The cubs began to devour the dugs of the lioness ; at first tentatively, but afterwards, when they felt that it quenched the fires in their throats, with avidity.

Meanwhile the sun went down upon Lake Natron. Twilight fell upon the mountain recesses, and under the glades of thorn-trees in the valley it began to darken. Above the black mountains of the lake there still hovered a streak of glowing crimson like a bleeding wound in the lovely dark blue sky ; but speedily that faded too, and night fell. Now other inhabitants of the *korongo* began to stir. The night wind blew through the mountain recess, and far down the *korongo* it bore its joyous message to hungry hyenas and jackals : “ Meat ! Plenty of meat ! ” Far down there, half a mile along the slood where the broad river-bed in the rainy season makes morasses and runnels between clumps of forest trees, the high grass, sheltered from the wind on both sides by bushes and high banks, began mysteriously to move. A very attentive observer would see (if he had good eyes) one pale yellow shape after another stand out on top of the bank against the monotony of the dusk-brown background. He would see how the hairy ears were shaken to make them alert, how their muzzles were pointed with suggestive sniffs up-wind—all so ghost-like that even after repeatedly rubbing his eyes he would doubt whether they were not simply pale tufts of grass or wraiths of his own imaginings, until suddenly one of them would utter the unmis-



takable bellow of a hyena, deep as that of a young ox, giving the signal for a general departure in the direction of the mountain recess. Then the moving shapes grew more distinct : a narrow rump sloping to a strong chest above two strong and pronouncedly long legs, a thick neck, and for such a body a gigantic head, with jawbones and fangs which need not learn even from the lion how to crunch a bone.

These were the visitors which our cubs would have to receive to-night at the rhinoceros. Last night, attracted by old Maanhaar's roars, they had come up, quite close by, but they retired from fear when the shots rang out so suddenly. To-night, however, after a week of hunger they had no doubts as to what they had better do. Although hyenas generally roam alone, or at most, at certain times, in small families, this particular night they came in more or less closely connected groups, continually being increased by isolated animals, for when danger was to be expected this plan seemed best to them.

How different was the feast at the rhinoceros which the moon now illuminated ! Of the nine lions, who upon that first evening entered the plain together, there now only remain these three tawny cubs, moving so seriously up and down between the carcasses—quite quiet, except when the smallest of them utters at intervals a plaintive cry in which the other two cannot help joining sympathetically. No thrilling lion choir disturbs the air of the mountain nook. Only the wind is making mysterious sounds in the trees, setting the shadows gliding over the ground.

Soon the cubs began to hear sounds which it was impossible that the wind could make: first, far away and uncertain, but every time plainer and nearer until there could no longer be any doubt of their origin. It was the hyenas approaching. The sounds were indeed not unknown to them, for every night since they first opened their eyes, to peep inquisitively through their curtain of leaves on the bank down into the plain, they had heard the howling of hyenas in the *korongo*; and later on they had come in touch with them on the hunting trips. After a day in which more and more a feeling of loneliness had overpowered them, the cubs were almost inclined to greet with relief the first sounds which betrayed the presence of other and, perhaps, kindred animals. But when the grey and sinister forms of the foremost hyenas arose out of the slood and appeared on the bank in the moonlight, they became uncertain; and uncertainty gave way to fear when the numbers of their grim visitors increased more and more, and at last in a distinctly inimical manner spread out in a half moon and advanced to where they were.

With distended necks, ears and manes stiffly thrown forward, and jaws opened wide enough to expose glistening fangs, the hyenas began to advance step by step, their mouths watering—but cautiously, for the whole place reeked of lion, and the three cubs at the rhinoceros doubtless meant that a full-grown pair lurked in the immediate neighbourhood.

The three little orphans began fully to realise

their helplessness. Now that their natural protectors remained dumb and were defied by one enemy after another, they lost all courage and self-confidence ; and when a few of the nearest hyenas in their excitement and greediness began to laugh and howl, a shudder of fear ran through them, and they began to beat a retreat to the slood. Never before had they heard such hideous noises !

The hesitant attitude of the cubs and their obvious loneliness lent the hyenas courage. For all his gluttony, the hyena is one of the most cowardly of the beasts of prey, and only defends himself against a stronger, when flight is impossible. However, if driven to extremes, he proves to be a fighter whose toughness and powers of endurance are surpassed by no other animal.

Of course, the cubs knew nothing of this, and they thought only of self-preservation when the horrid big-headed creatures, strengthened by fresh arrivals continually rising up out of the slood, grew bolder and bolder, and presently, when their desire could no more be restrained, made a rush at the carcasses. Quickly they fled down the bank away into the undergrowth of the *korongo*.

All night long the weird noises accompanying the wild orgy continued, and in the sandy river-bed, gleaming like silver between the dark greenery, the three little lions wandered up and down in despair. After a while they ventured to approach the rhinoceros under the bank, for it very soon became apparent that the hyenas had no thought of pursuit, and were overjoyed that the cubs had

relinquished the booty. But it was all too plain that the hyenas were masters of the field, and, quite discouraged, the three turned back and lay down to watch from a little distance.

It was not till dawn that the gluttoned hyenas, with distended sides, began to slink away to their lairs, and, when the first beams tinting the summits of the Koueberg were greeted by various noises from the animals of the plain, the scene near the acacia was lonely and forsaken. A few minutes later three pale and gaunt little lions crept out of the undergrowth up the bank, and stood before the skeleton of the rhinoceros.

Gone were the lions. There was little to remind the cubs of them in the bones lying about on every side! Without a sound the three bewildered cubs sat in the disturbed and upturned sand—the last means whereby they had hoped to quench their thirst had vanished. Then they began to sniff at the hyena spoors and to raise the hairs of back and neck in true lion fashion—the smell vividly recalled the fighting of the previous night.

As the sun grew hotter and the vultures came in hordes out of the plain, a few bits of dry flesh, still adhering to the skeleton of the rhinoceros, were swallowed with difficulty; then after “*miaauwing*,” as in duty bound, the cubs crept back to their shelter of yesterday, where much-needed sleep again for a little while allowed them to forget their thirst.

Although the lions had disappeared, the cubs had no intention of deserting the neighbourhood. The *korongo* had always been their home, and the

roaming instinct which awakens in every lion as soon as he is weaned, still slept within them under a feeling of dependence. Besides, there was always the far-off hope that the grown-up lions must be somewhere in the mountain nook, for the little lions had not rightly understood the recent events.

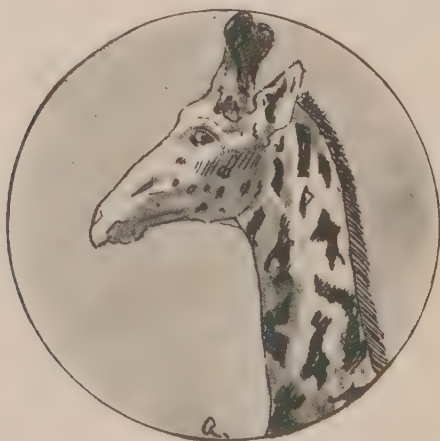
In vain at sunset they sat beside the skeleton, listening and gazing up at the *krans*, whence at this hour the impressive lion choir had usually greeted the evening. The branches of the wild-fig tree under which they used to rest and the dark clumps of bushes, rising like plumes out of the crevices, could be seen waving in the gentle breeze. But now no challenging figure stood up there on the rocky pinnacle. Then when the vultures on the trees in the sloot began to stir restlessly and to attract the attention of the cubs, there stood before them again in the little open space one of those hated hyena forms, grey and ghostly in the twilight, which had come to tell them it was time to depart. Emboldened by their recent victory, the hyenas had no hesitation in falling upon the remains of the rhinoceros ; and before even the moon had risen the terrible turmoil of the previous night was in full swing once more.

Next day the troop of wildebeest were again browsing on their beloved spot in the green *laagte*, whence they had been driven that evening at the unexpected appearance of the hunters. A group of inquisitive zebras ventured even up to the great camel-thorn where, whinnying and snorting, they sniffed about the men's camp. When the sun

set and night fell upon the wilderness, they could see the little fire of the men far across the valley at the foot of a rugged, stony kopje, glimmering in an immensity of darkness. From now onwards the tiny, bright flame would flicker farther and farther off each night, at last to disappear altogether, once more leaving the deserts of the Koueberg undisturbed.

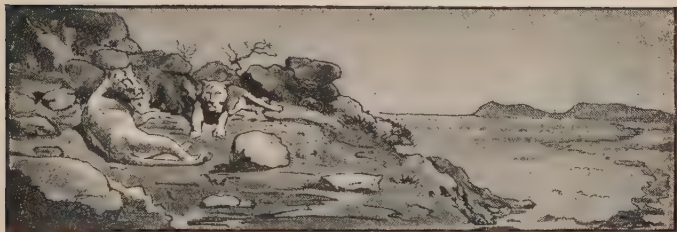
And this evening, in the red glow of those flames, six outspread lion skins were being proudly displayed, two of which would at once attract the eye of every hunter—one on account of its mighty size and rough bush of grizzly hair, the other by the extraordinary sheen of its silver-grey mane and golden hind-quarters.

But far away in the mountain nook, in the dark shadows of the high trees, three lonely and hungry cubs were wandering forlorn in the mazes of the *korongo*, seeking water.





## CHAPTER IX



IT was a stormy evening about a week later. Ghostly shapes of mist, which as a rule confined their nightly dance to the foggy summits of the Koueberg, were creeping down the slopes, driven mysteriously hither and thither by a breeze which could not yet be heard down here, and were beginning to envelop in gloomy darkness the mountain nook and the nearest part of the plain. The world of sunshine was recalled only by a few huge clouds calmly sailing in gleaming colours high above the fog. The quickly darkening glow showed that the sun was sinking in his usual glory. But here in this mountain nook it was gloomy that night. With a rumbling noise the wind suddenly swept over the trees of the *korongo*, whose crowns were heavy with moisture. It brought clouds of mist ever denser and denser from the forest heights, until all was covered and only the nearest vicinity visible.

Night followed quickly upon twilight—a wild night, dark and full of mysterious noises. The

voices of the desert awoke on every side. Under the song of the wind, hardly discernible, yet growing louder from time to time with the oncoming gusts, came the neighing of zebras, who foresaw an anxious night approaching—a real lion-night; and the howls of the hyenas coming up the slood for the third or fourth time to make sure that nothing at all was left of the rhinoceros, and to live once more on the memory of that exceptional feast.

Suddenly the wind turned north and the dense fog began at last to fall in a soft drizzle, which blew cold in the faces of two lion-cubs, climbing out of the *korongo*, going down for the first time alone into the plain. When they got to the acacia and trotted over the short grass, away from the skeleton of the rhinoceros, it was not difficult to make out that there were only two of them; and the eye which had learnt to know them, and to distinguish one from the other, would soon have discovered that it was the little weakling who was missing. As soon as they had crossed the open space and got through the slood, the cubs turned away from it so as to avoid meeting the hyenas. The nearest way to the open plain lay round the mountain over a few rough, stony ridges where grew ragged thorn-bushes, singing their sad song in the high wind. Behind them in the dark *korongo*, only just visible through the rain and fog, they heard the disconsolate howling of the hyenas as they turned back, still hungry. The lions having disappeared, it would be some time ere they laughed again. But although that complaining note predominated in the hyena

voices, not for a moment did the cubs dream of attaching themselves to the rabble. The events of the last week had not encouraged any idea of reconciliation. Besides the fear which the greedy creatures aroused in them, a strong feeling of repulsion had developed—that repulsion which every lion, later on in life, feels for other beasts of prey. Above all, it was something very much more important than a desire for company which drove them in such wretched weather down into the inhospitable plain.

Each night the little orphans had to stand aside, for the boldness of the hyenas increased daily, and each morning as the cubs returned to the skeletons after the departure of that vermin, it became more difficult to find any food. Little strips of flesh and sinews torn with difficulty from the hard rhinoceros hide was their only food for a few days after that tragic night. But gradually even the tough hide had disappeared beneath the steel jaws of the hyenas, and what they could not eat they dragged away to their lairs.

What had become of the other little cub? In the sand of the steep kloofs and deep furrows of the *korongo* the history of their wanderings could be traced. In their great need they remembered certain small water holes, visited in the first days with their mother, and their spoor plainly told how they had spent days and nights in a desperate hunt for them. Yet wherever they went, disappointment awaited them—and the spoors showed that the hunt for water had been long and difficult: now

between steep banks darkened by rank shrubs and grass, then into water-worn holes under twisted tree-roots. The little rain-water in the mud holes had dried up. But although the spoors told of thirst and hardships, of tenacious perseverance in the fight for self-preservation, they kept the secret of the fate of the smallest of the three cubs. Always weaker than the other two and petted by a watchful mother, the privations of these last days had proved too much for her. Possibly she had fallen into one or other of the deep fissures made by the rains, some of which were so overgrown with grass that a man might unwittingly walk into them, and had been too weak to get out again.

He who has followed our three playful little lions from that first care-free evening, when they had so proudly set out on their first hunt and gallantly participated in the baptism of fire at the cattle-kraal in the plain until that luckless night when the earnestness of life was so suddenly thrust upon them—he who has thus learned to know them will nurse the hope that a speedier death put an end to the little creature's last plaintive, unheard cries. Yet—why? Was she not but another of the thousand animals that suffer through man's ruthlessness?

It was near sunset when the two cubs appeared for the first time without their little comrade in the broad, sandy river-bed above the acacia, where old Maanhaar had fought with the dogs that day; both with faces scratched by twigs and thorns, and red with earth from the narrow fissures through

which they had squeezed. Their flanks were painfully thin from hunger and thirst, and this fact will immediately dispel the idea that they may have devoured the missing cub. They delayed but a moment at the skeleton of the rhinoceros, and it was something other than the howls of the approaching hyenas which drove them on so quickly. A wild animal will battle to the last for life, and in sagacity he exceeds the tame animal just as much as man exceeds him. In their remembrances of their short acquaintance with the plain, there lingered the thought of the streamlet, where twice they had gone to drink with the full-grown lions. Unwilling as they were to forsake the spot where they yet hoped to see the old lions, they now, after a week of thirst, had got so far as to forget everything, but that somewhere in the wide plain there must be water. And it was thither they were going as they took the little path round the mountain.

The two cubs felt half afraid and terribly lonely as they left the little hill and its thorn-bushes and saw the wide, inhospitable plain stretching its grey flats before them. But it was a week since last they had had a drink, and bravely they thrust their black, shiny, wet muzzles against the breeze, eagerly licking the raindrops which fell only too slowly.

At the foot of the ridge they crept cautiously between the black stems of the last isolated thorn-bushes, and came out on a grass-covered open space where thicker stems and the broad, dark crowns

of camel-thorns rose vaguely out of the dusk. Soon they left behind them the grass-covered dale where the first lioness had been shot ; and now they were going over the hillock where as of yore stood their old acquaintance, the hartebeest bull. Wet and hunched up as he was, standing there on his little hill with his head down-wind, seemingly asleep, he yet quickly noticed the two little wanderers. The disappearance of the lions had caused him much reflection and some uneasiness. He had felt much safer while he could see them now and then, and after a week of quietude he had not yet left off looking out for their reappearance. The only signs the bull gave of his discovery were a turn of the head and a quick thrusting forward of his ears. But as the cubs approached, his interest was increasingly aroused, and the disgusted attitude he had adopted towards the cold weather completely disappeared. When they trotted by, quite close, and he got the lion scent, his head was suddenly raised and every sinew of his body stretched to the uttermost. Distrustful and ready to dash away at the faintest sign of danger, he gazed at his little enemies, expecting the lions to follow without fail, and fearing they might possibly be stalking him from another direction. When it appeared that the cubs were trotting off without bothering about him, his inquisitiveness and uneasiness grew too strong for him, and he began hesitatingly to walk after them—timidly, yet with a wonderful grace in every lithe movement : only a few yards, however, until the grass seemed to be higher and the



bushes darker than usual ; then returning quickly to that wisdom long experience had taught him, he veered round and again took up his position on the bare kopje, where for a long time he continued to keep a sharp look-out.

The cubs could not go too far out of their way, for the mountain shut in the valley on the left, and a range of little hills did so on the right, and unwittingly they were getting nearer and nearer to the water-course, although with many twists and turns and needless deviations. Everywhere they encountered game, which in fear of lions had gathered closely together for the night ; and in the company of so many animals the forsaken little wanderers regained a little courage.

Repeatedly they were greeted with frightened snorts and the stamping of hoofs, and once or twice a herd of game, for whom the scent of lions proved too much, galloped away. But all at once, right in front of them, there arose out of the dusk a dark object, which they at first mistook for a black rock, until it moved suddenly, came nearer, and an ominous sound—"pfrrrr"—met their ears. This was no ordinary game ! Before they could decide what to do, the rhinoceros, who had not yet noticed them, glided past them with noiseless steps. But at that moment he got the lions' scent, which from his earliest days had terrified him, and in the twinkling of an eye, with a piercing snort and an unbelievably quick turn, the dark colossus made a rush at them.

Quick as the rhinoceros is, it seldom happens

that he gets the lion. A few bounds forward, a quick turn to get down-wind, and the lion is quit of the rhinoceros, who depends more on his nose than on his eyes. For a little while he rushed on puffing and snorting, and when he found nothing on which to vent his ill humour, he satisfied himself by chasing off some zebras that in great excitement had heard the noises and were standing about utterly bewildered.

As soon as the cubs had recovered so far from their fright as to look about them, they observed something which quickly filled their exhausted bodies with renewed energy. In their flight they had landed in the middle of the strip of green grass below the little spring, where a strong smell of mud and the deep spoor of rhinoceros plainly indicated the presence of water. There also arose the cluster of high yellow thorn-trees which marked the site of the spring ; and while they were still pushing through the wet, high grass with their eager muzzles, they almost fell into a puddle of muddy water—the hole in which a moment before their blundering adversary had been rolling. It was one of many such holes made by the big forest creatures when on such rainy nights as this they left the forests to wander through the fog-bedimmed plains.

What did it matter that the little pool was more mud than water ! Only he who has suffered the needs of the desert will understand the delight with which the two cubs, who had been suffering so long, pressed their black muzzles into the liquid as,

lapping and gulping and almost choking, they drank as if they could not take it in fast enough. It was only after their most urgent thirst was quenched that the usual daintiness of the lion returned so far as to prompt them to leave this spot, where the rhinoceros had been rolling, and go higher up where the water was clear. This was scarcely thirty yards away. And after standing still for a moment to listen to the grunts of a wild hog they had put up, they came to the drinking-place which the game frequented.

The plains had slowly been swept clear of fog by the north wind, and although the drizzle still fell it had grown less dark. But it was cold—cold and terribly lonely on these wide, open spaces ; and now that their stomachs were full of water they began to think of the cosiness of their old home up there in the recesses of the mountain. For a moment they stood irresolutely at the edge of the stream with their feet half hidden in the mud, into which the dripping wet tufts of their tails also sank. Listlessly content they looked about them now that their goal had been reached and their one great need satisfied. The way home, yes, that would not be difficult to find, for above them frowned the dark mountain showing black in contrast with the white clouds, vainly trying to creep over its summit against the wind.

Having for the last time dipped their tongues in the water and perfunctorily licked the moisture from their lips, the cubs began to find their way through the high grass, which chilled them as it

brushed against them, at each touch scattering raindrops thickly over their tousled fur. With a feeling of relief they emerged into the bare veld, where a drier path could be found between the short tufts of stubbly grass so beloved by the game.

Choosing the shortest way, and keeping as close to the mountain as possible, they soon left the troops of game behind and came to a stony bit of veld covered with little thorn-bushes. With an air of excitement, which betrayed something more than haste to evade the cold, they beheld the mountain rising before them, which with the one above formed their recess. That black stripe in the darkness was the *korongo*; and with the feeling that now they were going home, there flickered in their dim animal minds the hope that the lioness and the other big lions would be there in the old retreat—for the two things were inseparable in their short experience.

Quickly the raindrops were shaken from ears and skin, and at a trot they ran along the first ridge among the bare patches between clumps of thorns, for on the hard, gritty ground the grass tufts were more isolated and it was not so wet.

Just as they got through the first strip of thorns after following a rhinoceros-path, and came out above the ridge on to a large, grassy open space, they stood spellbound and afraid, looking over the flats. There, right in front of them rose up a number of pallid shapes—wild dogs! Their first thoughts flew to the hyenas, which had filled them with such

terror a few nights ago, and with a feeling of repulsion born of that experience, the cubs bounded out of the path and trotted quickly to the right, off to the mountain. The wild dogs, who had arrived too late to discover aught but the traces of the hyenas' feasting, were *en route* for the plains, all their senses sharpened to the uttermost by hunger; and when the two cubs bounded away—were it never so noiselessly—they were immediately discovered.

Despite the boldness which had made him commander of the troop, the leader of the dogs had hitherto always found the scent of lions too much for him, so that when after a sharp gallop he got to the spot where the little lions had stood, he remained there hesitatingly, disappointed in his expectations. The cubs were disappearing twenty yards farther off round a thorn-bush. Their evident forlornness and fear lent the wild dogs courage; and when the hindermost pressed forward in a mass, not yet aware what the foremost dogs had put up and eager to reach the anticipated prey, the leader sprang forward once more after the lions.

Wild dogs eat anything almost that smells like flesh—even one of their own comrades should he be unlucky enough to have got seriously wounded. The chase after the cubs, begun thus hesitatingly and without a definite object, soon became a hunt which to all appearances was bound to have a fatal ending for the two cubs. Awkward as their movements still were, it was impossible for them to

escape such pursuers—and resistance was not to be thought of.

The sudden and unexpected attack of the wild dogs, which the cubs thought to evade by making a detour, quite disconcerted them, and it was by the merest chance that as they fled they ran right into a black patch of extremely dense *haak-en-steek*<sup>1</sup> thorn. Here their pursuers got into difficulties. Incited by the barking of those behind, continually coming up from all directions, the foremost dogs were already close upon the heels of the two cubs. But as they disappeared under the thorny, trailing shoots of the creepers, the chase slackened immediately and the dogs spread out, each seeking the best exit he could find.

When the lions emerged they found themselves at the foot of the ridge, and near a rocky kopje in front of the entrance to a rugged mountain kloof. Instinctively they followed old Maanhaar's tactics and fled between the rocks. Quite breathless they crept into a cold cleft and lay there panting and utterly exhausted.

Up above on the ridge the dogs could still be heard in the undergrowth; but their zeal had appreciably lessened, and after a few intermittent barks all grew still at last, except for the soft sound of the rain, which again began to fall steadily and heavily in the darkness. The dogs had evidently given up a chase which from the very first was only half-hearted, and had resumed their earlier plans.

<sup>1</sup> *Haak-en-steek* = literally hook and prick.





The foremost dogs were close upon their heels.



The caution of the dogs may be put down not to fear of those destructive thorns—for when on spoor the wild dog will allow his ears, or his hide if it came to that, to be torn from his body—but to the belief that the full-grown lions must be lurking somewhere in the undergrowth and would attack them at any moment. Only too often had they experienced the lion's rage when they had surrounded him while at his prey.

The cubs, too, had not escaped without many scratches. Blood on their ears and bare patches over their ribs showed where the sharp, curved thorns had gripped them.

At last they were sufficiently recovered from fright and fatigue to think of a warmer hiding-place, for there in that cold cleft the wind was cutting and water was beginning to trickle under them.

Like many of the rocky kopjes in this land of volcanic mountains this one, on which our little lions had landed so opportunely, was full of fissures and caves, some as big as small rooms. The cubs entered the very first one and found themselves under a hollowed rock where the chilly wind could not penetrate. The bottom was of soft, dry soil and loosened grass—evidently they were not the first animals to use this shelter.

Without the usual ceremony of bed-making, the two threw themselves down in the farthest corner and fell asleep almost at once.

A wild spot this black, rocky kopje on so tempestuous a night—enough to give a feeling of

terror to one not familiar with the wilderness and its sounds; and our inexperienced cubs, if fatigue had not held them so fast asleep, would have listened with astonishment to all the mysterious noises on every side.

With every puff of wind the air grew full of the rustle of little waterfalls in the *kran*s on the other side of the kloof. Gusts of wind frequently swept with hollow sighs through the forests, deep under the overhanging cliffs, and on all sides the trickle of streamlets falling through clefts and hidden runnels of the kopje was to be heard. The high crowns of the dense cluster of yellow thorns growing near-by at the entrance of the kloof waved backwards and forwards in the wind, and their boughs scraped against each other with sounds as of some one in agony. Intermittingly came the strange cries of *dassies*<sup>1</sup> that from their kopjes and cliffs seemed to be watching the state of the weather the whole night. A pair who possessed a secret run close to our cubs were particularly talkative, and the anxiety in their tones brought more than one neighbour peeping from his hole to discover the cause, but beyond that none allowed his interest to move him.

And all the time the wind whistled through the thorn-trees, bringing from afar the hungry and forlorn notes of complaining hyenas and jackals. But by daylight all looked very different. For as the first beams of morning shot over the green hills and fell on the mountain-side, that gloom which

<sup>1</sup> Dassie=a rock-rabbit or coney.

hung so uncannily over the spot disappeared : warmth and colour lay spread over it all. The entrance to the rugged mountain-kloof with its dark trees lost its appearance of a black, forbidding cavern ; and the whole veld, fresh and green after its bath of rain, seemed to rejoice and sing. The thorn-trees had ceased crooning their dirge and the creatures of the day, gayer than those of the night, began to awake on every side.

Thick banks of fog still hung over the forests high up on the mountain, but the rain was over ; the last few clouds drifted quickly westwards, scattering big, bright drops in their flight, leaving the vast, outstretched blue of heaven spotless in its sunshine.

Pleasantly warm fell the rays of the morning sun upon the little rocky kopje where our two little wanderers had found shelter during the night, and soon countless *dassies* appeared out of its fissures and holes to sun themselves. Fat old fellows with shiny brown fur took up their usual positions and seemed to wish for nothing more than to lie all day perfectly still, looking at the sun. But the young ones, round, soft little bundles, bursting with life under their cosy grey woollen coats, began playfully to call to each other and to glide over the flat stones on their india-rubber-like paws.

Suddenly there appeared in the dark opening under one of the rocks two little lion faces that with lively, alert eyes, black, quivering nostrils, and round ears pointed, gazed upon their strange surroundings. Their attention was fastened upon the

queer cries and squeaks, hitherto unknown to them, which had for the last hour or so filled them with wonder. Half frightened they turned their heads, looking about them hesitatingly, this way and that, as the sounds continued to come from one side or another. Hardly had the foremost cub put a forepaw cautiously out of his shelter when two callow little *dassies* playfully chased each other along a ledge of rock just under his nose.

Without exactly knowing what he was doing, the little successor to old Maanhaar suddenly pounced upon and held the hindermost *dassie* fast under his paw. At this sight the second cub sprang up quickly and fell upon the sprawling, screaming creature. Shivering with excitement at this their first catch, they bit and pulled nervously at the soft woolly fur while the *dassie* was being squeezed to death by their weight. With a sudden ebullition of rage, hitherto foreign to them, they buried their sharp white teeth in the soft, warm flesh. The *dassie* gave his last squeak and lay still ; and the two cubs, filled with a wild, strange courage, began to growl for the first time since that fatal night.

From every side the terrified *dassies*, who at the first screams had rushed to their peep-holes and watched the attack, now fled into their shelters. But the cubs were quite unconscious of the panic they had caused. After a week's fast they had no thought for anything but the feast.

While each cub held a red forepaw on the prey, the warm blood which ran down over the stones



was greedily licked up. To tear open the soft body was the work of a moment and then the feast began in earnest. Nor did it end in the usual romp—their need had been too great to be forgotten so soon; and full as their stomachs were, the traces of the week's privations were still visible on their gaunt bodies.

Towards ten o'clock that morning they could still be seen lying there in front of the cave among scattered bones and fur—the one lazily picking at the bones of the *dassie's* head, which he was turning round and round between his paws, the other busily licking the splashes of blood from chest and paws.

It was not till they began to feel thirsty that the two showed any interest in their surroundings. They would not have to seek water for a few days, as every hollow stone on the kopje was a little puddle, and above the yellow thorns the dripping of little streams into a pool could be heard. The stream, which emerged from under the trees and farther along ran through a cluster of them into the open plain, was indeed not merely a runnel of rain-water, but the beginning of a strong spring—the same from which our cubs had drank yesterday.

Milk after a meal was now merely a memory to our little wanderers; and after all they had gone through, they felt perfectly satisfied with the rain-water, of which they drank from the nearest rock until their heavy stomachs sagged. Then there suddenly awoke in them the desire to climb up the rocks—to look down upon the well-known land-

scape with its *korongo* and huge acacia, where the vultures would be circling and quarrelling over the rhinoceros. But how different everything looked ! To the right lay the thorn-covered flats through which they had fled in the night, to the left the yellow thorns which on that side hid the veld from view, and right below, beyond the patch of *haak-en-steek* thorn, a stretch of the plain was visible where blesbok<sup>1</sup> and hartebeest moved like white and yellow spots upon the green grass beyond the spring. With a rather plaintive "miaauw," which proved that he had not yet forgotten the old home and the old lions, the more forward cub took up his stand on the ridge, whence both of them gazed anxiously down, as if they sought the direction from which they had come yesterday. It was plain that thoughts of a return to the *korongo* held them both and made them restless.

It was not easy to come to a decision after all that had happened. There lay the dark patch of *haak-en-steek* thorn, which had left its marks upon their bodies, to remind them of their narrow escape in the night. Here, on the other hand, they had spent a day, such as they had only had in those old days while the lioness was still alive. The sun shone pleasantly on the stones and soon the feeling of weariness, which always accompanies a full stomach, overtook them.

But suddenly their attention was drawn away from themselves by the appearance of a troop of giraffes approaching in single file at a leisurely

<sup>1</sup> In East Africa Grant's Gazelle is called Blesbok.

pace out of the plain. They passed the yellow thorns and took up a position near some wide-spreading acacias at the edge of the *haak-en-steek* thorn. And the inquisitive cubs almost forgot



Giraffes approaching out of the plain.

their own troubles as they lay down to examine at their ease the huge, singular creatures standing there among the trees, their long tails beating from side to side against their legs, their heads hidden high up amongst the foliage. Their interest did not last long, however, for a lion cub cannot lie still without falling asleep, and after a few minutes

their eyes began to close and the giraffes and everything else were forgotten.

The first sounds to meet them as they awoke were the cries of the *dassies*, who made their appearance on every side to enjoy the last of the evening sun ; and before nightfall the two cubs were hot-foot upon a *dassie* hunt. The success of the morning had awakened a slumbering desire, and in the excitement of this new occupation all their earlier plans were forgotten for the moment.

Indeed it did not go nearly as easily as in the morning. Very soon the cubs discovered they could not run along the stones nearly as quickly as the *dassies*, and that their prey, if only aware of them in time, disappeared with perplexing rapidity between the rocks. And when one of the cubs, turning a corner suddenly, ran up to a female with her family, he was made to find out that the creature was not as defenceless as he imagined. In astonishment he stood back while the enraged mother threatened him with hoarse, guttural sounds, at the same time retiring step by step to her hole, into which her young dived one after the other. Now his old playfulness reappeared, and with an affectation of anger the cub began to attack from every side the vicious *dassie*, which was really a very big one—now from the left, then from the right he made menacing jumps at her, as he had so often done to his two little comrades up there in the sands of the old *korongo*. But the terrified *dassie* found nothing funny in all this, and as soon as she saw her young were in safety she sprang round suddenly,

and with a last cry of derision disappeared into the fissure.

The young *dassies* were less clever. It was not long ere a stifled cry announced that one of them had been caught ; one who in his surprise had fled into a corner where there was no outlet. When the second cub came running up at the noise it was all up with him.

There on the ledge in front of their cave, where, purring and well pleased with themselves, they had dragged their booty, they could listen in peace to the howls of the hyenas and other beasts of prey. Even the puffing of a rhinoceros, splashing about on the edge of the water under the yellow thorns, had no terrors for them this evening. The only sound which would disturb them and bring them excitedly to their feet—the roaring of lions—was not to be heard.

The evening air grew cooler in the damp hollow, where the thorn-trees began to whisper and the plaintive cries of plovers came floating over the veld. In the dusk the giraffes passed the kopje on their way back to the open plain for the night, silhouetted like phantoms against the rapidly increasing darkness. Far below at the edge of the wide-stretching valley the last light was dying away on the lake ; the black streaks of thorn and the dark trees growing in the hollows melted away gradually into their monotonous surroundings. In the clear starlit night the mountain-tops stood up frowning and massive in their blackness.

It was long past midnight. Above a rugged stony ridge far, far away there rose a pale disc of a moon—the last gleam of that glittering orb, which from the cold sky had witnessed the fate of our lion family from that very first night.

The two lion cubs were resting against a bank of red earth not far from the kopje, listening, as they lay, to the noises of the plain. Suddenly they jumped up and stood there in an attitude of attention. Far away down there where the camp of those hateful men had been, their wakeful ears became aware of the dull sound, “uuuummpf.” Motionless, they listened in the dark. Was it mere imagination? No—there it was again! Louder and louder swelled the deep booming voice until the welcome and triumphant notes of a lion’s full-toned roar trembled through the silence.

Surprised, the two cubs bounded forward. Lions! Lions! Joy thrilled within them, and in an excess of unexpected happiness they tried to answer those roars. And although the young, unbroken voices hardly achieved that, their attempt was enough to fill them with a new feeling of exultation. Out of breath, more from excitement than from fatigue, they reached the little path where the *haak-en-steek* thorns almost met the lowest clump of yellow thorns. Before them lay the grassy glen which led to the open plain. For a moment they stood there to listen once again.

The direction was no longer doubtful. Again and again the lively salutation reverberated over



the plain from down there in the valley where the young lion couple had stalked the giraffes that night. Beside the little stream the cubs trotted along, taking no notice of the groups of affrighted buck they encountered; and when the clear, metallic voice of the lion rumbled away in a last smothered "uuummpf," they were already visible—two lions beside a zebra which they had killed earlier in the night.

Excitedly the cubs, who had been isolated for so long, began to "miauw" and to growl at the same time, in a hurry to reach the lions, whom at the first moment they took for their one time comrades of the *korongo*.

At the first sound the two lions looked up with displeasure, their ears flattened suspiciously, for they were surprised at the cubs' sudden appearance. But their suspicion turned to astonishment as the two unexpected little visitors grew more recognisable, and despite warning growls from the lion, came trotting on towards them so boldly. The lioness, who had been leisurely chewing at the intestines of the zebra, rose slowly upright, stretching her head towards the strangers, who now began to hesitate, realising as they did that these were not of *their* kin. The lion, a little farther off behind the zebra and unwilling to stand up, but nevertheless greatly interested, half raised himself from his recumbent position.

The poor little beggars had indeed good reason for their hesitation, as it was difficult to judge, from the stiff attitude of the lioness, whether she would

chase them off or receive them kindly. Half afraid, half pleased, they sniffed at her tentatively, making their bodies as small as possible, for their reception was still uncertain.

The two lions were sated and in a good mood. The circumstances in which they had come in contact with the cubs before had been very different, but neither of them recalled the night when they had been driven off in so unfriendly a manner from the rhinoceros by old Maanhaar and Kraagmannetjie, nor did they comprehend that Maanhaar had saved their lives by thus chasing them from the dangerous food. And so our two little lion cubs, who would have offered their friendship to the two hungry strangers that night under the acacia if their mother had not been so anxious about them, were now made welcome. Not an hour after they had made each other's acquaintance it could be perceived, from the changed attitude of the lioness, that it would not be long ere the cubs would have won all her interest.

When next morning the *dassies* cautiously peeped from their holes, afraid of the foe who had taken up his abode in their midst, they made the delightful discovery that the coast was clear and that the sunshine was left entirely for them to enjoy undisturbed. The lion cubs were gone—gone with their new protectors into the vast wilderness. Far down the valley the lions chose their hunting-ground where the little pools of rain-water glittered in the sun, and whither the game would migrate in ever-increasing numbers, spending in its barest

reaches, as is their custom, the rainy months of the year.

On those dark, misty nights when the spectral shapes creep along the Koueberg mountains and glide pallidly over the plains, the old hartebeest bull still stands on guard there on his bare hillock, and his eyes seek among the shadowy forms of the night for the well-known lion shapes. But since that wild night when the two cubs came from the *korongo* past him in the rain, the old path is used no more.



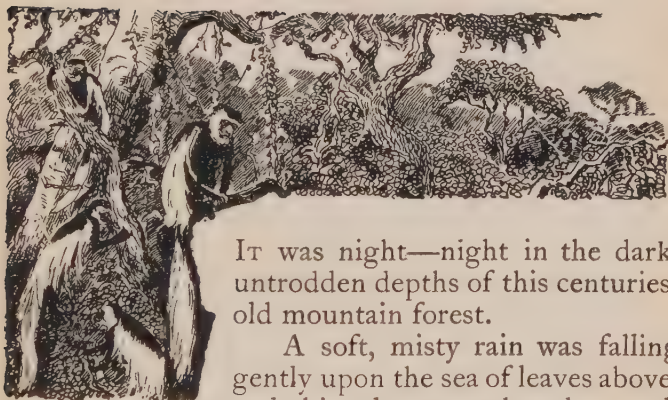


IN THE FOREST





# In the Forest



IT was night—night in the dark, untrodden depths of this centuries-old mountain forest.

A soft, misty rain was falling gently upon the sea of leaves above, and big drops gathered to roll one by one upon the roof of my tent with a dull flop, or splashed hissing into the little camp-fire in front of it. By fits and starts the gusts of rain came down harder, with a dull rustling as of distant wind, then suddenly ceased to make way for a deathly silence in which every leaf seemed to be listening. The streams, running off countless tree-stems and curling vines, grew stronger, and soon the dead leaves in this deeply trodden rhinoceros path were beating against the tent. The little fire was dissolved in steam.

Just before dawn the most profound silence reigns for a moment in the animal world. The creatures of the night have left off making their noises and, tired out, each has retired to his lair, whilst those who are active principally by day have

not yet cast aside sleep or recovered from the coldness of the rain. The monotonous song of owls and the cries of night apes which all night long filled the forest with strange, awe-inspiring noises, gradually grew silent and, after a few long drawn-out notes, each went to his resting-place under the dark foliage or into old tree-stems to enjoy his daytime sleep.

The wind had gone down and the rain had ceased, except that big drops still dripped from the leaves, hanging down in black, motionless clusters.

Now and then the silence was suddenly broken by the abrupt, hoarse roar of leopards still making themselves heard, or by the sharp crack and heavy thud of an old decayed forest-giant sinking to the earth, after having proudly reared his luxuriant crown for centuries up there in the sunshine, to fertilise the soil for the young trees that were to take his place.

Only the tiresome song of the mosquito grew louder in this, the last hour of the night. These fiery little tormentors, the plague of Central Africa and the annoyance of every hunter who penetrates to the marshlands, now came from their hiding-places under the leaves and the grass, where they had taken shelter from each gust of rain or wind, in dense swarms more bloodthirsty than ever, to sting again their poor victim and to make up for lost time ere it should be day.

The first light of morning was greeted by almost every animal with its own peculiar cry.

At intervals the various sounds of the night were repeated—sleepily, and only a few times. Then the creatures of the day began to stir. Hardly had the pheasants begun to call to each other from every side, ere a flight of hornbills, with heavily flapping wings, left their perches near-by in the trees and loudly acclaimed the birth of a new day. Their hideous screams filled the air and were enough to strike terror into the heart of any stranger to the forest. Nature has not given any other creature so raucous a voice with which to express its joy and love of life. First shrill notes were uttered, like the cries of native children being beaten ; then they were sustained to long hideous screams, such as one dying in despair might utter, to mount suddenly in crescendo to a full choir of every possible and impossible noise—and all together, like a troop of insane witches, they swept along. Other flocks farther off, fired by this welcome to the morning, which doubtless was to them a stirring one, flew shrieking through the air. Rhinoceros-birds also uttered their plaintive notes somewhere in the bush, and higher up in the mountain the shrill trumpeting of elephants was to be heard.

It was time for me to take up my post, for to-day I intended to lay aside my gun and, with only camera and diary, endeavour to take an impression of the daily life of the inhabitants of the forest. To this end I had chosen a suitable spot on the previous evening, one of those magnificent circular openings in the forest which poets sing of as fairy rings, covered with soft, green couch-grass, a small pool

of rain water in its centre. The fairies which were to appear that day were of a prehistoric kind, and distinctly more corpulent than those light-footed dancers, as was clearly shown by the deeply trodden



paths from every side. This was the favourite drinking-place of all kinds of forest creatures, and full of expectation I went to the edge of the grass and leant against a thick tree-stem.

One glance over the glade, now quite light in comparison with the dusk under the bushes I had just left, was enough to convince me that the only

early visitor was a pig—one of those giant pigs to be met with only in the depths of Africa. He had just taken his mud bath, and of his usual brindle colour there was nothing to be seen but the white of the strip of wiry hair rising straight up from his neck and back. He was intensely busy with his morning meal, consisting of the sappy roots of grass, which he dug up with his great projecting tusks; and he looked happy and well pleased with himself.

The rain was gone, but over the dark trees lower down (for this was on a mountain-side) there rolled a sea of dense fog, out of which here and there the tops of the highest trees rose like rocks. Driven by a fresh morning breeze, the mists began to float away to the west, and in a few moments the luxuriant landscape lay in all its beauty under the rosy light of morning.

As the first beams shot over the trees and made the countless raindrops on the leaves glisten, there began the peculiar concert of a troop of colobus apes, who had spent the night perched among the foliage high on the other side of the glade. Hardly had the old leader—who is always present in a troop like this—uttered his first gruff bass notes—"oa-ôrrrr—oa-ôrrr"—ere a dozen others fell in from every direction and brought the whole forest to life. Beginning softly from the lowest guttural note, the voices of the choir rose rhythmically, reverberating more and more and with ever-increasing power to a climax, then sank just as gradually, softer and softer, until they entirely died away. In between rang out the sharp "kjow ! kjow !" of



the black apes, who aspire to the highest society of the monkey world—and indeed the magnificent colobus of Kilimanjaro represents the very highest.

Soon these extraordinary creatures began to show themselves. They sprang out from the leaves into the sunshine and began to play and to chase each other high up in the tree-tops. With unbelievable rapidity they shot from bough to bough, apparently unconcerned at the abyss into which one false step would precipitate them. Often one would fly presumptuously in a great curve from some height, right through the air, to alight with unexampled certainty upon a branch near the ground. For a moment he would hang there upon its swaying tip, then jump on to a tree-stem, and after a few bounds sit high up in the summit and then once more give the signal for a general outburst of hoarse cries. After a while they appeared one by one on the outer branches in the sun, gazing about them. The colobus makes, indeed, a splendid impression among the green foliage, with his body clothed in shiny black fur, against which the white cloak, sweeping over neck and shoulders, so sharply contrasts, and with his thick fan-like tail of fine, pure white hairs almost as long as a horse's.

After half an hour their games ceased. It is only at sunrise, and sometimes on days when the sun suddenly appears after a shower, that their joy of life exhibits itself. That earnestness and silence which more or less all creatures of the forest possess, appears most strongly in the colobus. To them life is a serious affair, and a trace of melancholy



is observable in their habits, and stares out of their almost human faces. It is as if the sombre twilight of the forests, the eternal song of the wind in the leaves, the impressive magnitude of Nature, which man feels so forcibly in these parts, also penetrates to the consciousness of these singular creatures. The forest has left its mark on them. This impression grew stronger each time I spied secretly upon them and carefully observed the expression of their faces and gestures. And once when I got one of their young into my possession, its behaviour gave me a further insight into their lives.

Out into the open veld, far from the forest it had to accompany me, and the greatest homesickness mastered it although quite tame and used to me. After a meal of plantain or other fruit, it would sometimes sit before the flap of my tent and gaze up into the sky for hours on end, its face wearing a mournful expression. It never attempted to run away. That pathetic and, as it seemed to me, reproachful look never left it, and daily it grew more melancholy. With that dumb look of longing, everlastingly directed to the sky, it sometimes uttered a plaintive little squeak which at last brought me to the point of wondering how to get it back to its family. But before I could repair my misdeed, it was dead.

There is something altogether singular and distinctive in their whole appearance and manner of life—something that puts them far above any other kind of ape. There is none of the baboon's rowdiness and quarrelsomeness, none of the ordinary

monkey's roguishness—indeed, the society of these is steadily avoided by the colobus.

After their morning's romp they climb about in a calm way, and when feeding, each leaf and berry is plucked with the greatest earnestness as if they thought : " One has to eat to live ! " The secret onlooker cannot help but wonder if there does not lurk what may be called a soul behind that quiet and intelligent countenance. Should we deny them all sensibility ? He who knows them well will have his doubts. They have also a language, and to each sound a definite meaning is attached. At the approach of danger an abrupt " tjeek ! grrrrr—" is menacingly uttered, and in the twinkling of an eye each ape disappears under the dense leaves. Some of them lie flat on the thick branches, and so motionless are they that the sharpest eye can discover them only with difficulty. The experienced hunter will then creep away and wait, until in a little while they peep again from the branches. But he who has heard the quite human groans and moans of a dying colobus, must indeed be callous if he ever shoot another. Other sounds bring the members of a family together, and a softer note is used by the female when she wishes to warn her baby who has climbed too far from her. While the little ones are still weak, they hang underneath their mothers : their hands and feet tightly clasping the long hair, they are carried safely through the tree-tops.

While I was buried in contemplation of the apes, slowly flitting through the dark foliage be-

decked here and there with blossoming creepers against which they stood out picturesquely, or



softly swaying as they sat on the topmost boughs, I was suddenly called back to the scene by a crackling under the opposite trees. The hog had also heard it and stood at attention. Each wild animal has

his enemy against whom he must always be on the alert, and the struggle for existence makes the life of the creatures of the forest far more complicated and adventurous than a superficial visitor would imagine.

All at once the nearer branches crackled and the low hanging twigs and tendrils parted suddenly, and a magnificent buffalo stood upon the green. His head held proudly aloft, he stood there motionless for a moment, the living personification of might and vigilance. First he gazed at the hog, then his glances fell quickly round about him, his wide nostrils suspiciously sniffing the air. It was evident that he was aware of some taint somewhere, and yes—just then the wind, which in the forest is full of caprice, betrayed me! With a loud snort, the horns lowered to the ground, the buffalo bounded away, tore asunder the curtain of leaves, and rushed crashing through the tangled undergrowth. His herd, just about to appear out of the trees, took alarm and dashed in full flight after their leader.

Frightened by all this noise, the hog rushed away, right in my direction. The next moment he stuck his broad, strong snout just in front of me through the leaves, and discovered—a man! With a terrifying snort, something like the roar of a beast of prey, he made a right-about turn, crossed the glade, and disappeared on its farther side.

The rumbling of some two dozen buffaloes' hoofs upon the soaked earth slowly died away in the dark recesses of the forest. After a few cries of alarm the colobus apes had disappeared, and the surroundings were suddenly still as death, and

apparently quite deserted. The unexpected trick the wind played me seemed to have destroyed my plans for the morning, for the noise made by the buffaloes would have warned every creature in the neighbourhood. And there was, I thought, little chance to-day of seeing another at the drinking-place, where they are always most apprehensive of danger.

Meanwhile, the sun had gradually invaded the little glade and awakened the grasshoppers and other singers of the green, and under the influence of their monotonous tune the picture of the circle of grass with its sombre circumference of forest trees became more and more confused before my eyes. Tired out by my long nocturnal vigil, I was on the point of dropping to sleep, when with a sort of shock I became aware of a dark object gliding over the grass. It was a rhinoceros. I had to rub my eyes to make sure I was not dreaming, and that the dark grey colossus, standing motionless in the midst of the short grass like a statue hewn from some rough stone, was a reality. He gave one the impression of a grotesque apparition from prehistoric days, and the illusion was enhanced by the great luxuriance of plant life on every side.

It is with the rhinoceros as it is with the elephant : suddenly he is there without your knowing whence he has come. He walks almost noiselessly over the soft earth and moss under the thick roof of leaves. It is difficult to see him in the shadows into which his colour melts so well, and he arises before you suddenly like a menacing spirit of the forest.

The rhinoceros advanced with a sauntering gait, while his trumpet-shaped ears continually moved backwards and forwards to catch the slightest suspicious sound. He never trusts to his eyes. To protect them from the twigs and bushes amongst which he lives, Nature has made his eyes as small as possible—but, then, there used not to be white men to guard against! Well may the gnarled pachyderm with his iron frame, his impenetrable hide and sharp horn, behind which lies the might of a battering-ram, despise all danger. Moreover, his hearing and sense of smell are developed to an astounding degree. Yet he seems to be no match for the cunning of man.

He approached to within three yards of the tree behind which I had crept in the greatest suspense; then, much to my relief, he turned aside and pushed his way through the leaves a little farther on. When he had gone about twenty yards he got down-wind, gave suddenly a mighty snort, and rushed away puffing like a steam-engine through the bush—away, luckily, for as a rule where man is concerned he comes up raging, following the scent—and the tree-stem against which I was leaning was very smooth!

The calm of midday again reigned over the animal world. It was growing hot on the grass in the glade. The wind ceased, and the sea of leaves was at last lulled to sleep. The only movement that now and then attracted one's eye was made by a few wild geese and a white heron that had settled at the edge of the water. The scents



of flowers and of plants rose hot upon the air and began to exercise an irresistible power. Everything abandoned itself to the enchantment, and for one who had watched all night to fathom the secret movements of the nocturnal creatures, the influence of the universal dreaminess was too strong. Now and then the shadow of a bird circling high up above the trees fluttered through the leaves. Everything round about—the lonely mountain-tops fading away far below in the hazy plains, the far-stretching, billowing forest, the pale green grassy circle with its still, flat mirror of water, wherein the dark crowns of the trees around it were reflected, and the white bird standing on one leg, dreaming—all gave a striking picture of the intense silence, the impressive loneliness of the forests of tropical Africa.

“Whirrrrr——!” It was not my alarm, but a flight of bush-doves rising from the water’s edge; and as I looked up, there stood a splendid leopard in the grass right in front of me. It was about sunset, and the glade was quite in shadow. The leopard, still half-asleep and listless, walked carelessly to the water with the charming gracefulness of his lithe limbs. But before he reached it he suddenly ducked down and glided in a crouching attitude to get behind a tuft of grass which offered a little shelter. Inquisitively I followed the direction of his eyes and discovered the reason for his unexpected manœuvre: from the opposite direction there came a bush-buck, airily, and with the dainty elastic tread so peculiar to his kind. He advanced straight towards the leopard, who had already got

ready to spring, and I watched for the approaching catastrophe with strained attention.

But my expectations and the desire of the leopard were not to be fulfilled. Before he came within reach, the buck hesitated and looked round : along the same path a great water-buck came bounding out of the bush. This was fatal to the leopard's plans. From his height the larger buck saw the brown back behind the tuft of grass. With a loud sniff he turned suddenly in full flight and disappeared again among the trees. The bush-buck waited no longer. With a few long strides he stood at the edge of the trees and looked searchingly in the direction where, according to the behaviour of the water-buck, the danger must be.

The attitude of the leopard as he arose and gazed after the hurrying buck plainly expressed a feeling of annoyance and of shame. He growled a few times softly through his whiskers, and showed his teeth; then returned to his first idea. But while he was drinking, his tail swished continually from side to side—a sign of ill humour. Having finished, he went slowly towards a wild-fig tree growing near one of the game paths, and after looking round once again he suddenly sprang up with an easy movement into the leaves and on to a thick forked bough about eight feet from the ground. He had laid his plans well, and I could not help feeling some pity for the poor buck that should be the first to pass under that tree to-night.

It was already twilight when a jackal appeared

and came trotting up to the water. What could this little visitor out of the grass veld be doing here in the forest? The question was still in my thoughts when suddenly, and in a very unexpected manner, it was answered tragically for the little jackal. He was already near the water, when all of a sudden he jumped up in the air, uttering a scream of terror. It all happened in a flash. As the jackal howled I saw the coils of a mighty python enfold him, and ere one could count three he was so encircled that nothing of him was to be seen. After a few stifled screams he could utter no further sounds. With the greatest calmness, but in deadly earnest, the snake drew its coils closer and closer together, and the twitchings of its poor victim grew less and less, soon to cease altogether.

Whether the snake had lain long in the grass, or had arrived just before the jackal, I did not know, for the grass was just long enough to conceal it. When it is hunting, the python generally lies rolled up, its head on top in the middle of its coils. As soon as the desired prey comes within reach—that is, not farther than the length of the snake—it shoots its body straight out and grasps the creature by a leg. The double row of sharp teeth slant backwards, so that the struggles of its victim merely cause it to be gripped more firmly. When those deadly coils once encircle it, a kind of despair seems to overpower the victim, who in its terror utters its cries for help—in vain, for even if its mate be near, it usually stands there helpless and hopeless, and in utter consternation witnesses the struggle.

At last the snake began slowly to uncoil its huge body—it was certainly no less than eighteen feet long—while it lifted its head and examined its prey from every side to make sure it could not escape. On this occasion I did not have the privilege of seeing how it dealt with it afterwards. The twilight had deepened rapidly, and night drew a veil over the scene.

A dark glow visible through the foliage was still painting the western horizon, but here under the trees it was already night. From out the plains the lions' booming welcome of the darkness could be heard even up here, and close by rang the deep bass notes of the hippopotamus, climbing out of the pools at the foot of the mountain. Up here, not far off, the branches were creaking loudly as if a number of huge animals were trying to break a path through them. Were the elephants coming at last?

Soon the night apes began to utter their long-drawn calls, and how insistent was that note of melancholy as it fell upon the ear at this hour when day was fading into night. Fire-flies flickered through the darkness under the trees, flying between the stems and hanging their little lamps among the curling tendrils of the creepers. The new moon sailed above the tree-tops, low in the sky, peeping through the dark foliage, now beginning softly to rustle, for the night wind has awakened and soon will begin to sing through the leaves his eternal song.

## THE TWO FRIENDS





# The Two Friends

## The Story of a Rhinoceros

### CHAPTER I



THE rhinoceros calf stood at the edge of the marsh and looked on impatiently at his parents, splashing knee-deep in the water among the rushes. What pleasure could there be in standing in the mud in this cold weather? He had been so glad that at last, after weeks of continuous rain, the sun had reappeared and he had thrown himself down beside a bush, hoping to dream undisturbedly in the sunshine. He had hardly made himself comfortable ere the two old ones left the tree against which they had been rubbing themselves, and the idea that they might go too far away made him uneasy, so he too had risen.

Of what should a little rhinoceros calf be afraid? Even during his short existence he had discovered that he had enemies. During the last journey to the plain he had been attacked by lions, and only the presence of both his parents had saved him. Then,

again, on the return to the mountain they had had to flee ignominiously from a troop of elephants, and his fear was enhanced at the sight, in this instance, of his parents dismissing any thought of resistance and turning tail in great haste. Elephants must be terribly dangerous, then ! And how he longed to-day for the plains, where the sun shone so beautifully and there wasn't all this rain and mud. Whenever would his parents trek again ? The whole place here was nothing but a morass.

So thought the little rhino as he watched the old ones splashing towards the papyrus grass, which began about twenty yards from the water's edge, stretching in a dense growth for half a mile over the marshes. Every now and then he stamped his forefoot impatiently when a fly bit him in some unprotected spot or other. All the dampness had made his hide so tender that he was torn under his belly by the stumps and roots over which he had had to climb while following his parents. His fear lest they disappear into the papyrus, and thus make it necessary for him to go after them through the water, was luckily not confirmed, for after plucking a tuft or two of grass out of the water they began steadily to return, browsing the while. At the edge they once more lay and rolled about in the shallow water. Then the cow got up, as if she had come to a sudden decision, and left the water. She gave her calf a kindly push with her snout, and he answered her greeting with a soft squeak, extraordinarily thin for so rugged a little pachyderm. Then she passed by him and took the big path leading up to the mountain.

The two big rhinos at last also came to the conclusion that it was indeed too wet up here, and that the time had come to seek drier quarters near the plain—especially as the Big Rains were beginning, and every ditch and dell would soon be a lake. One need not wonder at the fact that they had to go up the mountain to reach the plain, for they were in a deep crater and would have to climb up the steep sides shutting it in ere they could make the descent. What once was a mighty crater is now a pleasure garden for all kinds of big game, as for ages the fruitful soil has been washed down, and under the tropical sun and tropical rains a wealth of plant life has grown whose luxuriance is simply indescribable. The basin is quite two miles in diameter, with an almost flat bottom. A great deal of it is covered with giant trees, with grass-covered open glades here and there, and at one side the papyrus marsh which our three rhinos were now leaving. All round rise steep mountains—the crusts that remained after the terrible eruption took place in the dim past. They are covered with dark masses of trees.

To get on to the great footpath the cow first turned to the right and made a way for herself through a rough tangle of vines and all kinds of plants with broad leaves. The leader ploughed her way like a machine through this bush vegetation, leaving a broad track behind in the mud, out of which the crushed plants tried to raise their fronds. Then she went on, to the great annoyance of the youngster, through a pool full of mud and spear-grass, where the water was almost black, and in

which he could not see the elephants' footprints. Consequently, he soon fell into one of them and got a good ducking. Then they followed an old rhino-path through an undergrowth of bushes with isolated high trees, and afterwards dipped into the twilight of the primeval forest.

Better going here ! The countless tree-stems rose like pillars on every side and spread their crowns so densely that the sun had no opportunity of penetrating them. Besides, the heavy rains had filtered through the dry leaves and mosses into the soft ground, so that at any rate one was not compelled to walk in the mud. After a while they reached the great elephant-path which crossed the crater and formed the only means of egress for the big game. Eastwards it led to an impenetrable wilderness of bush and morasses ; westwards to the plains, stretching out behind the dark ridge at the foot of the mountain. The calf noticed with satisfaction that his mother was steering a course towards the sinking sun. Although still quite young, he already knew the most important rhino-paths, and this one he had travelled several times with his parents to reach the grass-veld. Could he but have known the sad fate that was awaiting them over there ! He was to make the acquaintance of a foe far more dangerous than any he has ever dreamt of in his short life.

The two old ones, being sated, did not dally on their way, and soon reached the encircling mountain-ridge. The deep sunken path zigzagged from side to side against the heights, and proved the dexterity with which elephants manage to climb

the steepest places. Before they got to the top it began to rain again, and day melted away almost unnoticeably into dusk. Night had fallen as they reached the summit, but that made no difference to them. They knew every inch of the black forest, which stretched here along the mountain slopes and made the darkest night yet darker.

Innumerable streamlets led the rain water down the face of the ridge, and here and there pools had gathered in the footprints of rhinos and elephants. Several times the three rhinos stopped to roll in these pools, or to break off a twig to chew on the way. But they always quickly resumed their march, and at daybreak reached the edge of the vast forest. Having pushed a way through the patch of high elephant-grass which bordered it, they suddenly stood on the bare veld, stretching out before them in the grey twilight of morning.

Ere the sun rose the rhinos retired into the dark shadows of the bush, for since the appearance of the white man on the scene these poor hunted giants do not feel safe on the open veld. Here under a gigantic wild-fig tree, whose roots hung down to the ground from the wide, outspreading branches, and formed a fantastic network around its stem, the rhinos meant to rest a while. The bull stood apart near a bush, browsing upon its succulent shoots. Their friends the rhinoceros-birds—small, pale grey creatures with red beaks, who relieve them of troublesome insects and warn them of approaching danger—having left them last evening, he was compelled to combat his desire for sleep, and had to keep watch. At the other side of the tree the cow

lay in an old rolling-place and sleepily flapped her ears from side to side to drive off the insects. The little calf was sleepy after the long journey, and had found a comfortable bed between the roots, whence he could keep an eye on his mother. But his small eyes were soon shut, and at last he fell fast asleep.

While the rhino family was resting so peacefully, unconscious of any danger, their misfortunes were slowly approaching. Two white hunters, who had been spending some days in the neighbourhood, had noticed at sunrise the fresh spoor of the three rhinos at the edge of the wood. Cautiously they followed it, and as the rhinos had gone up-wind—as is their custom—they could stalk them unobserved. The rhino's sharpest sense is that of smell, and it would disclose to him the nature of any foe coming down-wind. Even when fast asleep he will be awakened as if by an electric shock should a man pass down-wind even a few hundred yards away.

Every now and then the grinding and chewing of the bull would cease as he stood still to listen. In such a forest there were so many sounds which one had to know exactly to be able to distinguish the enemy. Had he heard a whisper? Or was it only the leaves? He pricked his ears. . . . Then a shot rang out! The bull fell down, but was up again in a second, and rushed away like a mad thing. The cow and her calf bounced up as if made of india-rubber, and raced after him.

It was plain that the bull would not get very far. At each step two thick streams of blood spouted from his nostrils, making breathing almost im-



possible. In his death-agony he stormed through the undergrowth with a speed that seemed quite incredible for so heavy an animal. Blindly he rushed down a steep declivity. His sight began to fail him, and he ran into a young tree which he snapped off and carried a little way on his back. Then he suddenly plunged forward, rolled over, and lay still. The two bullets—for the hunters had fired simultaneously—had entered his lungs and his heart.

The cow, who with snorts had followed close on his heels, stopped and tried to help him up with her long horn. Meanwhile, the calf also arrived; stumbling over the tree roots, he just managed to keep up with them by the greatest exertion.

It seldom happens that a rhino leaves its fallen mate in the lurch. Often they will return, despising all danger in their endeavours to rescue the lost one. If one is wounded, he often rises to his feet again with the help of his mate's horn, and is thus able to continue his flight for a long time. But on this occasion the cow's efforts were in vain. One might have said that the bull died ere he fell, and that his terrible speed had kept him on his legs—so still did he lie there. The little calf trotted anxiously up and down, squeaking in his thin little voice. At last the cow gave up the attempt, and stood irresolutely beside the dead body.

Thud—thud—thud—her sharp ears heard the dull sound of human footsteps. With a sudden decision she turned round without a sound, lowered her head with its formidable horn to the ground,

and waited. But for a moment—the bushes moved and two figures emerged. With enraged snorts and puffs the cow made a rush at them. Simultaneously two shots again rang out, but her charge was by no means stopped. Both had fired too low. Another shot—the rhino staggered, but for an instant only. Too late the hunters thought of flight. There was no chance to load again. The foremost reached safety just in time behind a thick tree-stem. The other had already stretched an arm out towards a branch when he felt the earth tremble behind him, and in the next instant he was tossed high into the air. He fell, quite unconscious, a few yards behind the raging creature. Fortunately for him she did not think of completing her vengeance, but used all her efforts in an endeavour to escape from the deadly oppression already dimming her eyes. Quickly she left her foes far behind. But her flight could not save her life, and at every step her pain increased.

At last she slackened her mad rush and stood groaning under some bushes.

The hunters, on the other hand, could not think of pursuit. When the wounded one came gradually to himself, it was evident that he was seriously injured. That he was not killed instantaneously was due only to the fact that the horn of the cow was extraordinarily bent, so that he landed upon its curve and not on its sharp point.

The calf, dead tired, was puffing loudly through his nostrils. There seemed to be the deuce to pay here in the bush to-day ! In terror he smelt at the blood which dripped from his mother and formed

a puddle on the ground. Convulsed with pain, the cow stood still awhile, then continued treading about aimlessly. When her calf came up to her and squeaked in a frightened way, she sniffed at him and began again to moan. The pain becoming unbearable, she roamed blindly on. At a little stream she drank, then lay in it—but not for long: the pain ever urged her onward.

Gradually she approached the plain. Quite worn out, she struggled to a clump of coarse renoster<sup>1</sup> bushes edging the open veld, and at last lay down never to rise again. During her last struggles she tore up the ground with her horn and uttered two or three penetrating screams—then all was over. Her flight had lasted five hours. The little calf imagined that at last his mother had fallen asleep after all her fatigue and, as he was utterly tired out, he lay down beside her and soon fell into a deep sleep himself.

The menacing roars of lions awakened him. In the twinkling of an eye he rose to his feet and gazed anxiously round. The sky was cloudless, and a blood-red sun was sinking behind the dark mountains. The rhinoceros cow still lay motionless in the same position. Squeaking, the calf ran all round the dead creature, poking his snout against the body on every side. Not only was he terribly thirsty, but he was afraid, for the roars were repeated and quite close by. From far away other lion voices could also be heard. Night was falling, and the little calf was in despair. Never before had the cow treated him with such in-

<sup>1</sup> Renoster bush = rhinoceros bush.

difference, and he did not know what to make of it.

The sparse bushes crackled : something was approaching cautiously out of the undergrowth ! With strained attention the calf fastened his eyes upon the point at which the object should appear. The high grass of a rhino-path about ten yards from him stirred, and suddenly a shaggy head appeared. Lions ! He remembered them well. In painful uncertainty the calf hesitated tremblingly, waiting to see if the cow would not jump up after all and make a rush at the foe with her usual ferocity. The lion, on the other hand, gazed at him for a moment with erect ears, not daring to spring. He was in doubt whether the huge creature was really dead, and feared her dangerous strength, which was not unfamiliar to him.

Suddenly the lion growled, coming quickly a little nearer. The calf turned and disappeared, snorting, into the undergrowth. Overcome by fear and uncertainty he roamed aimlessly about in the neighbourhood of the cow, but remained in the dense thickets, not daring to come any nearer, for in the increasing darkness he heard how the number of lions grew larger and larger. Their voices were raised threateningly whenever two or more of the dreaded beasts of prey met in sudden combat over some titbit or other. These noises continued all night. The little rhino felt utterly helpless and lonely amidst all this, for no other animal ventured to approach this scene of terror.

Towards daybreak the calf quenched his thirst in a pool under the great trees, and as it grew light



The calf poked his snout against the body.





he came cautiously nearer to the dead rhino. He discovered very soon that about six or seven lions were still busy there, and noiselessly he retired again into the undergrowth. Even after the sun had risen the lions did not think of leaving. As they could eat through the hide at only a few spots under the belly, they were far from being sated. Besides, there in the shelter of the dense bushes they felt pretty free from the danger of a surprise.

As a last resort the little rhino determined to follow up the blood-spoor of yesterday, and seek the bull. Although he was beginning to feel that both his parents were lost to him, he could not exactly understand the position. For several hours he followed the wavering spoor of the wounded cow, reaching at last yesterday's place of misfortune. The bull was still lying on all-fours, and seemed to be sleeping. So thought the calf for just a moment as he caught sight of him and trotted up to him, squeaking. Excitedly happy, he poked the body with his nose from every side; but for a few seconds only; then he stepped back and gazed sadly at the insensitive animal. The situation resembled too closely that other of last night not to enable him to see quite plainly that the bull as well as the cow now meant nothing more to him.

Did he hear men coming? The hunter had not yet had time to sever the horn, and was only now returning from camp where he had been attending to his wounded comrade. The little rhino had betrayed himself by squeaking, and when he looked up he saw that he was surrounded

by Kafirs. Finding himself encircled and threatened, the rhinoceros spirit in him awoke suddenly. He attacked, therefore, snorting just as his parents used to do, and indeed for a moment this unexpected manœuvre dispersed the blacks, putting them to flight. But the hunter caught hold of him from behind, and held on to him with might and main. The little rhino made a hard fight. The hunter could not detain him single-handed, and before the Kafirs could come up he got away and rushed off like a steam-engine through the trees. Now he had but one thought—to make the distance between his enemies and himself as great as possible. The bush had brought him nothing but misfortune these last two days, and so he made for the plain, where he hoped to spend the night at all events in the company of other animals.

However, in his wild flight he had gone far out of his course. When after half an hour he came to his senses and thought he ought to turn more to the left so as to reach the well-known territory, he discovered that a deep slood prevented him from doing so. In vain he sought to find a way out lower down. The kloof grew ever narrower and deeper, and seemed to be a fissure formed by an earthquake. Although at some places it was so narrow as to allow a man to jump it easily enough, the little calf grew dizzy as soon as he came to its edge, for the fissure seemed to be bottomless. At all events its bottom was invisible in the dusk of the forest.

So the slood led him far out of his way, and when at midday he at last reached the edge of the great

trees, he found himself in unknown surroundings. Instead of the plain, bright and animated with its many wild inhabitants, he beheld an interminable wilderness covered with high elephant-grass, all kinds of huge thorn-trees, and marshes. However, as at this point the slood ended, he could at last turn to the left. He knew that the open veld lay in that direction; besides, the idea of returning to the cow was always uppermost. Everywhere between the spreading trees he came upon morasses and pools of water, which he tried to avoid by long detours. Half an hour after, he came to large sheets of water surrounded by yellow thorns, and heard hippopotami snorting and blowing. After he had passed by the second of these pans<sup>1</sup> the landscape suddenly became familiar—he had often come hither with his parents in the droughts when water was scarce in the higher regions. He now knew that the plain could not be far off.

He reached the last pan by a deeply trodden hippo-path. It was bordered on one side by dark forest trees, on the other by high grass and shrubs right to the open veld. As it was growing dark, he hastened his pace. The path skirted the water, and when it was broad enough to allow of it he even broke into a trot. Right in front of him three hippos climbed out of the water—two full-grown ones and a calf. He had often come in contact with these clumsy creatures, and his parents had even had friendly relations with some of them, so he stood still while the huge animals approached and came to sniff at him. They tarried but for

<sup>1</sup> Pan = a large sheet of comparatively shallow water.

an instant, looking round with astonishment for the full-grown rhinoceros. They passed on, and then it was their calf's turn. Inquisitively they walked round each other, and seemed to be speculating over the differences in their appearance. At last the little rhino gave two clumsy springs, and waited to see if the new comrades were also satisfied. Although the fat little pond-dweller had not got so far as that, still he showed that he was kindly disposed by rubbing against the little rhino and then uttering a soft bass note. They had made friends. Instead of struggling through the patch of undergrowth, which still separated him from the plain, the little rhino walked with his new comrade into the dark forest, where all night they feasted on the luxuriant vegetation. After his most trying journey the rhino calf indeed felt the need of food and rest.



## CHAPTER II



EARLY next morning the little rhino stood alone at the water's edge, gazing sadly after his three friends, who had suddenly disappeared into the depths before him. His round little comrade of the night had remained for a while beside him on the bare, steep bank, where they nibbled at the dark green rushes; but when his parents went in farther and farther, the little hippo grew uneasy. The cow turned round impatiently, pushing the still water in wide circles before her huge body and, blowing the while, approached the bank, tempting her youngster into the water with her deep voice. She had suffered, kindly enough, the company of the little rhino during the night's foraging expedition through the green of the forest; but it was now time to return to the safer element. With a clumsy movement of his stumpy, thick legs the baby hippo plopped his round, funny little body over the bank into the water and swam after his mother, leaving the lonely orphan to himself.

The hippos did not wish to remain out of the water any longer. They were sated, and felt in-

clined to play; besides, instinctive caution prompted them to prefer spending the day in this safer way. After a while they stuck their heads out of the water again and began to snort. The calf swam once more up to the edge and seemed to wish to entice his friend also to enter the water. Cautiously, with outstretched upper lip, the rhino sniffed at the water from several points, but apparently he came to the conclusion that it was too deep to venture even putting his forefeet into it. And in this he was not deceived. The bank was rocky, and the earth under it deeply washed away.

Snorting and romping, the two hippos went farther and farther away, the bull a little in advance, for over there on the little green islands in the middle of the pan he heard the snorts of others, and the idea arose that perhaps they were his own troop from which he had separated a few weeks ago on account of the little calf. The calf had also gradually left the bank, following his parents, and again the rhino began to feel utterly forsaken. The impatient snuffling with which at first he tried to tempt the little hippo to come out while he ran excitedly about the bank, treading the soft mud full of round footprints, became an imploring squeak as his friend swam farther and farther away. At last he grew silent. There they went, apparently quite unconcerned about him.

Then he remembered his former plan. But it cost him something to make up his mind to go. The peaceful way in which he had spent the last night and the company of his new comrade had allowed him to forget his sorrow for a while. But



now he realised that there was nothing left for him but to seek his mother in that dangerous lion-country.

Quarrelsome and moody as the rhinoceros may become later on in life, in his first youth he is a sociable, good-natured fellow, inquisitive and full of interest in everything going on around him. It is only after self-protection and a continuous vigilance against cunning foes have become necessities, that pugnacity is born and an inclination to declare war against everything and every one is developed. Deprived of his natural protectors, a young rhinoceros is ready to make friends with the first wild animal he may meet. After a week's captivity he will even grow so accustomed to man, whose extraordinary form inspires such fear at first, that he will follow him about like a dog, and will even squeak if he lose sight of him.

It was easy for our little rhino to make friends with the hippos, whose exterior reminded him of his own kin; and in his loneliness their departure seemed to him to be a great loss. He stood there for some time, now and then uttering a soft squeak as he stared across the water with outstretched head in an attempt to see a little farther with those tiny eyes of his. He looked lonely and forlorn enough with his knotted, awkward little body, crumpled, mud-covered hide, and melancholy countenance.

Rain clouds began to gather over the sheets of water. The sun must have risen ere the four animals left the forest. But the sky was full of clouds, and a big downpour was not far off. The trees lay black under the all-pervading greyness on

every side, and high up on the tree-covered mountain the heavy fogs gathered, foreshadowing the rainy season of the tropics.

In that pale grey light the little rhino seemed to be almost black. The tall forms of a small troop of water-buck loomed vaguely, huge and dark, as they walked through the rushes on the other side of the pan, where the mists rose around them from the wet earth.

In melancholy mood the rhino calf at last turned his face away from the water and began to make his way at a slow pace through the undergrowth. Almost aimlessly his short, fat legs stumbled through the reeds surrounding the pans, then he passed under the shadows of a dark patch of forest, coming out again at more marshes, full of rushes and tambouki grass. Now for the first time he observed that he had lost his way. No outlet seemed possible from this tangle of morasses, and beyond lay the menacing, sombre, black primeval forest. No, on this side the plain could not possibly be! Back, then, to the pans, and then along the broad hippo-path beside their banks, between the tall reeds. Yes, there were the coarse bushes and great yellow thorn-trees—a sure sign that he had reached the edge of the mountain-forest and must be nearing the plain. Innumerable rhino-paths crossed the undergrowth in every direction, and it was difficult to steer his course. However, here he knew the veld better, for his parents had often come here with other rhinos on their way to the mountains after a night in the plains. Bravely, then, he pushed his blunt snout under the shrubs when the path

disappeared into a dark opening, thrusting upwards the bush plants with his back. The bushes closed behind him, and for a few minutes the crackling of twigs and the trembling leaves were the only signs of the little wanderer's progress. At last one of the paths led him to the open veld.

The flats did not immediately join the bush here ; for a few hundred yards they were separated by some rough ground. The grass grew high between scattered mimosa, mahogany, and other trees, growing in groups or in narrow strips. Especially in the hollows did our little friend find it difficult to look ahead. But he was beginning to learn more and more, and as long as he kept the edge of the dark forest in view and followed it, he could not go astray.

Frequently a startled riet-buck rose whistling before him, and bounded away over the bushes with widely spread hind-legs in long, graceful curves. In one of the many mud-holes in the high grass he came suddenly upon a herd of bush-pigs. It did him good to meet other animals again, and in a little while he even began to bite off a twig here and there to chew on the way.

Presently the big trees were more sparsely spread and the grass less troublesome. After crossing a deep slood the rhino calf forsook the black, volcanic soil with its rank, luxuriant plant-life and climbed out upon the firmer ground and short grass of the plain.

Inquiringly he threw his trumpet-shaped ears forward and gazed about him over the veld. But this was not the sunny scene of other days that his

eye fell upon ! In the distance grey veils of rain were falling, and in the monotonous, neutral tinted air, with the clouds of mist trailing over the veld, it seemed as if to-day not a living thing inhabited



The rhino calf climbed out on to the short grass of the plain.

the plain. Only after the eye had gazed long enough over the landscape to be able to detect movement, was it possible to distinguish in the distance between the shapes of game and of bushes. Quite close by a dead twig suddenly crackled, and as the little rhino looked up in its direction, he saw

among the trees to the left the tall forms of a troop of water-buck, all holding their watchful heads high in the air. They had heard him coming through the slood, and stood so still that he had not observed them until a slight movement of one exposed them suddenly to view.

He thought he recognised in the distance the spot where the cow had come to grief, and after gazing hesitatingly for a moment at the buck he went on his way, glad to be free at last of the troublesome scrub. Soon he met other larger troops of game of every kind, but he took little notice of them. Now that he was approaching the well-known spot he was kept busy with thoughts of his mother. An episode, however, retarded his progress. A number of young elands saw him, and after gazing at him inquisitively and half afraid, ran up gaily to examine this queer apparition of the forests. The young of a troop of eland generally run alone during the day while their elders, afar off, are grazing and keeping watch. Used to this family rule from their earliest days, the playful little creatures amuse themselves in their own fashion during the long hours before drinking-time again comes round. A diversion such as this they seldom fail to take advantage of—if only to exhibit their extreme speed to more clumsy visitors.

Astounded at all this unexpected interest in himself, the rhino stood still, looking questioningly at the little elands who had surrounded him and seemed to wish to make his acquaintance. At first they were rather afraid, but grew bolder as the severe-looking stranger exhibited no combativeness.

A few of the biggest even ventured to sniff cautiously at him with outstretched necks. The rhino silently permitted these expressions of a desire for friendly relations. Highly delighted with their own boldness, some of the young elands began to gambol around him as if to entice him to join them in a romp. But he was not to be drawn from his serious rhino dignity, and after a bit he walked off without thinking them worthy of another look. Round a bush the sombre little wanderer disappeared, leaving the light-hearted elands to themselves. What did *they* know of sorrow and care?

The little rhino was not wrong in his calculations. The cow was indeed lying not far from the water. A few hundred yards away from the elands he became suddenly aware of a strong smell which reminded him of his mother, and yet had something quite strange about it. Cautiously and up-wind he approached the bushes bordering the forest, and recognised the spot where the cow should be lying. In the path before him he discovered the spoors of many lions, and around the dead animal the grass was trampled quite flat. What a number there must have been! The cow was still there—but what a change! Lions and hyenas had managed to penetrate her hide in several places, and portions of the rhinoceros were missing. That nothing of her was left to him now, the little calf realised perfectly well, yet he could not resist plaintively squeaking and poking at her.

He would not have left the carcass so quickly had he not heard a deep growl from the nearest kopje, and been afraid that the lions were again



approaching. Whither should he go? This question occupied him as he anxiously walked round the cow, listening for any stirring of the bushes. To return to the spot where the bull lay was not to be thought of: the fears of yesterday were still in his heart, and no doubt, too, the men were still there.

Again those terrifying roars! The remembrance of the frightful spectacle he had witnessed that night here beside the cow made him feel afraid—he must get away. Cautiously he sought out the widest path through the scrub, and slowly entered the flats. Now, for the first time, he noticed that it was raining and that a dense fog was rolling over the veld, covering everything. Not a vestige of the mountain-crater was to be seen, and the whole landscape was shrouded in a grey veil, through which the dark shapes of scattered thorn-trees glimmered vaguely.

At this moment he would gladly have thrown in his lot with the young elands, for he felt terribly lonely in this dangerous neighbourhood. But where were they? On the spot where he had met them no game was to be seen: only far in the distance the neighing of zebras could be heard.

The reason for this was suddenly revealed to him only too plainly, for quite close to him a lion's full-throated roar burst forth. It was this that had driven away the game. Luckily the fog prevented the lion seeing him, or he would have remained silent and have made for the helpless wanderer. The warning came just in time! At the first roar the frightened little rhino turned suddenly to the

right at a swinging trot, and when the roar was repeated after a minute he perceived that the danger had been left behind. However, the menacing roars boomed out from several directions, for the rain had aroused the lions before their usual hour. In such weather they delight to give vent to their love of hunting by frequent roars as if they were out to defy the elements. A tempestuous night seems to fit in with their mood.

The rhino paused under a tree to take breath and to consider what he had best do next. He had a great desire to squeak and so relieve his anxiety ; but he dared not venture. Even his laboured breathing, whistling softly through his nostrils, made him fear detection. He felt that it was very unsafe to remain there for the night. To seek the other wild animals in this weather was exceedingly dangerous, for at any moment he might encounter one of those terrifying lions. Quite naturally the idea of returning to the pans came to him. If he kept to the right in the bush there would be less danger of lions, and as soon as he reached the forest he'd be safe, for there he had never met lions and had heard their voices only in the neighbourhood of the plain. Perhaps, too, he would find his three friends there. So, late in the afternoon, as the rain began to pour down more heavily and the fog to grow more dense, our little fugitive was once more hastening along the path to the pans, where he hoped to see before sunset the three hippos climbing out of the water.

It was fortunate for him that the lions of the neighbourhood had already got the scent of the dead

rhinoceros, and that all of them were on their way thither. Dusk had fallen when he passed the first clump of trees, among which dark, gigantic, towering ant-heaps were scattered, and reached a part of the forest that jutted into the plains. In the midst of the trees he discovered a round, grassy clearing, where the confused croaking of hundreds of frogs met his ear. In the soft couch-grass, where the choir seemed noisiest, the rhino espied a tiny pool of rain-water, and he was just about to refresh himself at it when he became aware of a strange noise. At a little distance from the circle of grass he heard men's voices, and between the tree-stems saw the dim glow of a little fire. While he was still staring, half overcome at this unexpected obstruction, the voice of a hippo in the bushes to his right suddenly gave him a fright, and involuntarily he jumped aside. Could it be his comrade? The voice undoubtedly belonged to a young one, and seemed to be familiar to him.

"Pfrrr!" He uttered the questioning sound, as he had learned it from his mother. Soon after the twigs crackled near-by, and the noise was repeated half plaintively—"uuu—hâw-hâw-hâw!" The little rhino hesitated no longer and went into the undergrowth towards the sound. And there among some high elephant-grass in a pool at the edge of the circle of couch-grass he met again his friend of the previous night. Full of joy he began to snuffle and to squeak, and trotted up to poke the little hippo with his blunt snout. This was his invariable method of expressing any great joy. In fact, this

is the highest expression of friendship with all rhinos.

The little hippo was undoubtedly no less surprised and glad at the unexpected meeting, but the anxiety and unrest that were tormenting him prevented him from expressing more than a moderate pleasure. He answered the extravagant greeting of the rhino only with some soft guttural notes, frequently repeated—"uuu—hâw." What could have become of the old hippos? It was not long ere the rhino knew all. As soon as it was quite dark the hippo calf led him to the clearing, and there in the short turf near the water lay the two huge creatures, outstretched, dead.

Twilight gathering earlier than usual in the rainy weather was responsible for the hippos having left the water before sunset. Ignorant of the fact that hunters, after a year's absence, were once more in their neighbourhood, the bull thoroughly enjoying himself as he tossed about the wet, juicy vegetation, let his deep bass voice be heard, and so apprised the enemy of his presence.

Our little rhino was gaining experience. The human sounds, which were still audible, told him plainly enough of the tragedy that had been enacted here shortly before his arrival. But the hippo calf did not yet understand what had happened. In vain the rhino tried to lead him from the dangerous surroundings.

They spent the dark, rainy night on the couch-grass. While the rhino appeased his hunger on the shrubs growing round about, his comrade walked restlessly hither and thither. Sometimes he stayed

for a time beside the dead animals, then back to the rhino, allowing himself hardly any time to feed.

All night the soft drizzle kept falling upon the leaves of the forest. Under the trees it was pitch dark. It was only in the little glade that a keen eye could follow the noiseless movements of the two animals. The weather that night was too bad even for the night-apes, and after a stray call or two they had gradually become silent. The only occasional sounds to be heard through the dull monotony of the rain were the abrupt roar of a leopard, or afar off a deeper booming which the little rhino knew only too well, making him stand still and hearken, wondering if he were far enough away from those terrible lions.

Not till towards daybreak did the rain gradually cease. As soon as it grew light the two creatures, recalled to the realities of their situation by the human voices among the trees, were compelled to come to some decision. Cautiously they withdrew into the undergrowth. But as soon as a posse of Kafirs came to cut up the dead hippos, they quickly made off in the direction of the large pans.

The men being in the path leading to the water, which the hippos had left the previous evening, the rhino took another to the left and soon reached a bare ridge, from which they gazed down into a bush-covered basin. Below in the midst of the dark green shrubs there glistened the mirror of a huge pan, spreading its irregular creeks in all directions between the bushes. The sun had just broken

through the fog and was shining brightly over the green landscape, upon the hillocks of waving grass and the rank plants, bending under their weight of raindrops.

Seen thus in the sun, the dark forest there on the mountain lost half its sombreness, especially when its thousands of inhabitants, filling the air with noisy cries, came into view on its billowing surface. Right in front of them stretched a waste of grassy kopjes with marshy undergrowth between them, and scattered clumps of forest trees where many hippo-pools lay hidden. Far, far away, beyond the last of the rugged hillocks, lay the green plain which neither of them had ever yet entered.

The pan down below, whither they were now proceeding along a stony, deeply worn hippo-path, was thickly surrounded by forest trees and some yellow thorns, offering an exceptional hiding-place. Indeed, there was noise enough going on there to lead one to suppose it was a favourite spot for all sorts of creatures. Black apes were beginning to appear in the yellow thorns, over which trailed magnificently green creepers with broad crimson petals that flamed in the sunshine. Farther off, innumerable colobus apes sent their tremulous morning cries from the trees. Huge flights of wild duck of many kinds came swishing through the air to settle on the water. Soon after them came herons and cranes, and before the two comrades reached the water's edge its bird life was in full swing.

They determined to spend the day here where



no danger could be lurking, for all around among the reeds, which enfolded the pan in an emerald ring, stood bush-buck and water-buck, sunning their wet bodies.

While his friend was swimming in the greenish-yellow water, the rhino slumbered at its edge under the overhanging foliage, where the soft murmuring of the water between the tree roots brought him many a dream. Now and then his rest was disturbed by the barking of a bush-buck near-by, or the noise of water-buck bounding through the undergrowth to reach the water. When at about eleven o'clock the little hippo came to lie close to him in the shallow water, he became quite at ease.

As usual the rhino woke at about four o'clock. Firstly he drank, then took a bath in shallow water, snuffing and snorting like a grown-up rhinoceros. At last he came out to rub himself against a tree-stem. During all this noise his comrade had gradually become wide awake, recalling all that had happened, and how it was that he had come to this place. And as night approached his uneasiness increased. He had forgotten it under the influence of the midday sun, but the family ties of wild animals are not easily broken or forgotten.

After sunset they browsed slowly along in the densest undergrowth until they reached the neighbourhood of the hunters' camp and, under pressure from the little hippo, revisited the circle of grass where the two dead hippos had lain. They found nothing but a few parts of the carcasses. The Kafirs

had cut them all to pieces and removed them. As it had been raining heavily since dusk, it was particularly quiet in the men's camp ; but the dim light of a small fire betrayed the presence of their mortal enemies. The hippo calf at last resigned himself to his lot, sadly and docilely following his leader, who, since his narrow escape from the hunters, had no peace in this neighbourhood. To this spot they would never return. That was quite determined.

It mattered very little which course they took, for on all sides lay the rugged wilderness, through which broad hippo-paths indicated the way to hidden pans. Now that they had lost their parents, one spot seemed as good as another. However, the little rhino, who on account of his greater experience took the position of self-elected leader, eagerly sought the path back to the deep pan in the crater, where it had been so pleasant. When as usual the winter sun broke at about ten o'clock through the mists, the two of them were to be seen at the self-same place at the water's edge, their fat round bodies rather conspicuous among the slim shapes of a few bush-buck grazing off the reeds.

For a long time they remained there on a bare patch between the rushes, basking in the sunshine. The moisture rose in steam from the rough and furrowed skin of the rhino, whose gnarled body and dark, muddy colour contrasted so strongly with the sleek round hippo, from whose broad back the slimy water of the morass was dripping. The sleepy eyes of the rhino blinked. He only kept them open out of fear that he might be

deserted by his friend, who was again restlessly staring across the water as if seeking something in its depths.

Early in the afternoon the sun disappeared, and the rain began to pour down upon the belt of hippopools. The huge snow-clad mountains in the distance, which at midday rose high into the sky like misty blue domes and pyramids, disappeared as if by magic in the quickly changing light.

Noiselessly, rapidly there came mist and rain on the light breeze from the extinct volcano, and everything grew so suddenly grey that it seemed as if the whole water-logged atmosphere was being dissolved in vapour. Darkly it glimmered under the nearest forest trees beside the pond, while of the bush-covered banks opposite nothing more could be seen than vague darkening outlines of tree-tops.

From the pale, misty pan the uncanny cries of water-fowl and other secretive birds arose. A couple of cranes flew up from the reeds to sweep over the water with plaintive screams, seeking vleis<sup>1</sup> farther away. On all sides noises were audible—some recognisable, others as mysterious as the forest itself, but scarcely a living creature was to be seen. Unperceived, the dusk of day passed into the darkness of night. Monotonously the rain poured down—steadily, for the breeze had dropped, and the sodden clusters of leaves hung down motionlessly from the sombre black bushes.

From under the vault of leaves the night-apes called sadly to each other. Far away out of the

<sup>1</sup> Vlei = pond or small lake,

darkness came the hoarse roar of a leopard and the deep bass notes of wandering hippopotami. Out of the pitch-black crater suddenly arose the shrieks of affrighted hornbills, filling the night with their hideous cries.



### CHAPTER III



THE big rains had at last begun in earnest. From the deep volcanic soil at the foot of the crater the rank plants sprang up in wildest luxuriance. The tambouki and elephant-grasses between the ponds waved and twisted higher and higher day by day until they rose far above the back of the biggest rhinoceros. The patches of coarse bushes, eaten bare and trampled to the earth by rhinos and hippos, put on a new dress of green and sprawled across the deeply trodden game-paths, inexterminable in their strong, fresh youth.

From the forest, where now it never ceased to drip, there rose the damp vapour of decaying vegetation. On a floor of soaked mosses toadstools and soft, spongy plants flourished profusely. Decayed tree-stems, overgrown with moss, crumbled away under their thick covering of dead leaves, overwhelmed by greedy shrubs which, under the dark roof of leaves, strained to reach the sunshine above. Rank creepers curled luxuriantly into the air above the highest tree-tops, scattering here and

there crimson petals and scented jasmine-like blossoms over the dark green of the forest.

Yes, the rains had come in earnest. The rhinos felt it too, coming down daily in increasing numbers from the dark mountain-forests to the more open tussock-strewn veld and the firmer feeding-grounds in the neighbourhood of the pans. Moreover, they felt safer there, for the elephants were once more on the rampage, making the forest dangerous now that there were drinking-pools everywhere in the mountains. Deep spoor and broad mud-tracks through the coarse bush vegetation, snapped branches and bruised tree-stems showed how boisterously the giants were behaving.

Cranes, herons, and other birds who do not nest at the pans also know that the rains have come, and retire to the far-off vleis, where they usually spend the rainy months. Fewer colobus apes were heard, for sunshine was rare and the forest was more dismal than ever.

On the other hand, the hippos delighted in the luxuriant, sappy rankness. It is just this kind of weather that pleases them, when their trips need not come to an end at the first light of day ; for they know that the cunning foe they so fear seldom prowls about in the uncertain light of a rainy day, when he cannot easily see them.

The two friends, now quite inseparable, remained for a few days in a quiet corner where the pond spread out among coarse bushes and yellow thorns. They also felt that the time of the great rains had come—at all events such rains as they had not yet experienced in their short existence. Sadly the



sunless days one after another melted into night. For the last two days they had not been able to use the sandy patches where, in the morning, they generally rolled in the sunshine.

In those first days after the events recounted in the last chapter, the little hippo was extremely restless and the rhino had to submit to being led on long journeys through bush and water. At last in that old well-known pan—his birthplace—the hippo disappeared for a whole day with the others, leaving his comrade in the greatest anxiety and distress. But the rhino received relief from a wholly unexpected quarter. The hunters had approached the pan along the broad, double spoor, and suddenly the hippo calf grew rigid with fear, for shots rang out and the bullets hit some of the hippos near him. He spent the whole day in the middle of the pan, too frightened to expose more than his snout whenever it became necessary to take a fresh breath. When at last he ventured to show his heavy eyelids above the surface, he saw the dead bodies of two hippos drifting slowly on top of the water towards the bank, where they were received by a bustling crowd of men. Terrified, he dived down again, and when it grew dark he climbed out quietly at a spot where some bushes overhung the water. He took courage in the dark, and allowed his hoarse call to be heard at intervals. The rhino had also fled from the hunters into the bush, and after repeated snorts and calls on both sides the two friends met again.

After this experience the hippo was more than content to flee to the lake in the crater. On their

way thither, and before they were out of the bush in which the rhino had hidden, they came upon a heavy blood-spoor. A little farther on they reached a wounded hippo who, tortured by a terrible bullet wound, had also fled from the water after the shooting and could now go no farther. The shot, which had been aimed at the brain, had crushed the lower jaw and condemned the poor creature to a miserable, lingering death. The massive head drooped in a dumb stare of despair, and a bloody saliva dribbled from the broken jaw in his vain attempts to gnash his teeth together. The noise made by the two frightened little creatures of the forest, whom he felt rather than saw, could hardly rouse him from his despairing stupor. With his gigantic strength how long might his agony last ! In haste the two left him, wending their way to their former hiding-place near the lake in the crater.

It seemed that day as if the sun were really peeping out at last. It grew light over the forest, and the grey surface of the water glistened once more through the mist under a pale, watery morning sun. Like veils the clouds lifted before the rising sun that sailed triumphantly into the blue of the sky.

The first to notice the pleasant warmth falling on the rushes was our little rhino. He at once forsook for the sunny fields his resting-place under an olive-tree, where he had rolled or stood with his blunt snout rooted in the earth. His friend, who had been watching his extraordinary behaviour with great interest, had nothing better to do than to follow him ; and as he desired to swim he quickly

dived from the bank into the enticingly sunny water, where he was soon quietly swimming about with his sides blown out as round as a barrel. Suddenly he would dive down only to bubble up a few yards off, snorting with delight. He was extremely pleased with himself.

The rhino stood still a while to gaze with his serio-comic, wrinkled face turned towards the hippo calf's spluttering, and wondered what one should do with such a comrade who always wanted to be in the water. Then his gnarled head sank lower and lower into the moist earth, and soon he was lost in thought.

If these two had forgotten their dangerous enemy in their sunny dreams, they had not been forgotten by the two hunters. While looking for the wounded hippo the men had come upon something which roused their desire to capture the little fugitives alive. In the freshly trodden grass it was easy to follow the double row of muddy footprints, and while the comrades were abandoning themselves to the charm of the sunshine, ominous footsteps were approaching stealthily through the undergrowth.

Inquisitiveness was a strong characteristic of the young rhino. Awakened from his dreams by the noisy concert of a troop of colobus apes who suddenly began their games in the trees, he could not help watching with his flickering narrow eyes their mad hunt over the billowing crowns, their snow-white, fan-like tails streaming behind them as they fled. Gradually growing more wide-awake, he began steadily to move towards a clump of mimosas,

whose sweet young shoots he was beginning to prefer.

The hippo eventually came to the edge to lie in the shallow water against a tuft of reeds, turning his right side to the sun : and when the hunters, having cautiously come down into the hollow, got out of the trees and gazed across the reeds, the first thing they saw was the fat, broad body shining in the sun. The rhino among the thorn-bushes could not be seen by them. It was a fine chance ! Feeling at ease in each other's company, neither of the two animals noticed that the apes, frightened by the stealthy figures, had suddenly ceased their gambolling after uttering a few cries of alarm.

Yet the hunters had to proceed with caution. On the water were all kinds of birds who would not fail to give warning, and not far off a bush-buck was grazing among the reeds. Creeping forward on hands and knees between the tall rushes, the foremost hunter had already reached the water two yards from the hippo, still unconsciously dozing beside the tuft of grass. But there is another friend of the animals—one who frequently upsets the most elaborate plans of their pursuer. A soft breeze blew in the direction of the mimosas.

“Pfrrr ! Pfrrr ! Pfrrr ! . . .” A rhinoceros ! Immediately the hunters grasped their guns, almost more alarmed than the hippo, who had quickly jumped up to gaze at his friend. The hunters then noticed their would-be attacker disappearing snorting through the thorns, and sprang hastily forward to grasp the little hippo ere it should be too late.

To hold the slippery little fellow was not exactly an easy matter ; besides, although ignorant of the men behind him, he was just about to run off. The round hindquarters slipped through the hands which had grabbed at them, and next moment a row of bubbles on the deep water was the only sign left by the little hippo.

This was the reason the two comrades were not to be seen next morning on the saltpetre patch beside the crater-lake when the sun rose over the trees. In a great hurry they left during the night, and whoever followed their spoor through bush and grass would have found them after a two hours' journey upon the grass-covered shores of a pan in the forest at the foot of the extinct volcano. Quite shut in by a dark wall of giant trees, this pool with its edges disappearing under dense clumps of bushes seemed to them just the place in which to hide.

Many days passed and the sunshine continued. As the moon waxed the weather had changed, and after a week of wild, pitch-dark nights and dull and gloomy days of rain, the forest wafted its scents once more under a sapphire sky. The exquisite days were followed by bewitching moonlight nights, when the fire-flies danced over the mystic, gleaming waters, and faint echoes floated through the forest.

Our two friends had made themselves comfortable under a great wild-fig tree in a quiet corner of the pan. Between the aerial roots hanging down from the widespreading branches the rhino, in true rhino-fashion, had dug up the soil and made himself a suitable rolling-place where he could spend the

midday hours. There in the broad shadows, darker still farther back in the dense forest, they could often be seen together on sunny afternoons generally fast asleep, if they were not browsing among the yellow thorns at the edge of the water, for since that last adventure with the hunters, the hippo, although not comprehending the pleasure his comrade found in a dry sand bath, had learnt enough not to sleep again at the edge of an exposed sheet of water.

They had not yet forgotten the fright they got that day, and although they had seen nothing more of the men, they took every precaution, even when the least danger was suspected. It was pleasant to see these two strange comrades jump up from their resting-place, their snouts together, vainly bothering themselves over the explanation of some suspicious noise they had heard in the bush. It was generally the rhino who did the investigating, for when it looked like danger the hippo was too fond of measuring the depth of the water without any further ado, which often resulted in the rhino losing all courage and hiding himself in the undergrowth.

His hiding-place was under a clump of bushes at the edge of the forest, so overgrown with vines and weeds that not the sharpest eye could have detected him under them. Like any other persecuted rhino our little one knew that safety was to be found in the scrub, where he himself remained invisible, while the approach of a pursuer could always be heard.

A wounded rhino makes a further use of such



scrub. If he has once sought shelter in it he usually has no intention of fleeing farther. It is in such places that he wreaks vengeance on his pursuer, for in the scrub, which when he rushes to the attack he tramples as flat as grass, the hunter can hardly stir and does not see his attacker before the shrubs burst asunder in front of him, and the provoked animal bursts upon him like a thunder-clap. Most sportsmen prefer not to follow the blood-spoor into such places.

Here our two had discovered some open spots where, safe from surprises, they could bask in the morning sun. After that last adventure they had become even more careful in the selection of a resting-place.

Gradually, after having run away from "nothing" over a score of times, they began to feel a little more at ease. The little rhino had learnt from his parents how to set to work if a strange noise be heard in the bush. You must call "Pfrrr!" and then listen. If it be another rhino, a reassuring "Pfrrr!" will come in answer. If not—well, the little hippo had never given him a chance to reflect. For a grown-up rhino there are two alternatives—either to flee or to attack. But our little fellow had long ago decided to cut out the attack, and in this his comrade strongly supported him. After one or two such anxious calls—"Pfrrr"—the greatest confusion reigned as a rule. The hippo, who was not accustomed to expose himself to any danger, would suddenly end the negotiations by snorting and tumbling "splash" head over heels into the water, while the rhino, rushing off as fast

as his short, sturdy legs would allow him, would disappear snorting under the bushes.

There he breathed softly through his nostrils, trying to get the scent of the foe. If after an hour nothing happened, he would emerge cautiously and again utter his soft, questioning call—this time to his friend, who had remained dead-still under the water, only now and then exposing his nostrils as much for the purpose of smelling as breathing.

As soon as he saw his comrade, the hippo understood that the coast was clear, and would then climb out of the water, remaining hidden in the tall grass. There in the shallow water, in which he sometimes also took a bath, the rhino joined him. They would be extremely pleased at the clever way they had again evaded the enemy—an enemy who in most cases had never existed !

Upon a sunny morning after they had been for an hour in the warm scrub, nibbling at the spicy leaves, the rhino turned suddenly away from his friend and walked off to the wild-fig tree. Of late he had done this frequently whenever his little stub nose, upon which a promising lump was forming that he loved to look upon as a horn, itched to be exercised. Well, to-day he was destined to have an adventure, wholly unexpected, and in which for the first time he would enjoy the pride of a conqueror. This is an important turning-point in the life of every rhino—the moment in which he learns that he is feared, and that his best means of defence in a sudden encounter is to attack.

As he stepped into the shadows of the big boughs he heard a sound. He stood suddenly still, half

alarmed, and ready for flight. But a second glance disclosed an unexpected visitor at his rolling-place—a bush-hog. A stranger at his rolling-place! That was indeed too much!

So also thought the hog when he heard the snorting steam-engine behind him. A minute after the fugitive had disappeared from the scene, the rhino calf stood there still snorting around, ready to rush at any little suspicious sound, and perfectly convinced that he now was terribly fierce and formidable.

The hippo, who had remained in the scrub, uncertain whether to follow the rhino or to go for a swim, heard the fuss under the fig-tree and also charged—towards the water! And there he remained until the rhino, proudly snuffing up and down the bank, persuaded him to come out. It was pretty plain to him that *out* of the water nothing could be expected from his comrade.

Next morning the pig was there again, but this time he carefully avoided the rhino's bed. For a long while he frequented the couch-grass at the edge of the water, busy with the salty roots of the reeds, but never losing sight of the two under the fig-tree. Whether this was his own preserve or not, a desire to remain there grew upon him more and more, and after each short interval of absence he would again make his appearance on the grass.

The rhino was not unwilling to make peace. Now that his ill humour had subsided and the stranger no longer plagued him, his curiosity began to overcome him. He would go nearer and find out what sort of company the newcomer was. Ere

two days had gone by they were often to be seen together browsing at the water's edge, where the hog initiated the rhino into the mysteries of grubbing up roots. Much to his astonishment, the rhino discovered that their taste agreed marvellously, and he applied himself with gusto to this new occupation, which afforded both pleasure and appetising food.

But his favourite haunt was among the yellow thorns. It was wonderful to see how he pulled down the branches, full of dangerous thorns, with his long upper lip, and how he swallowed them apparently without the least discomfort.

He had grown to love this life—there among the pans. Now that they had at last escaped the machinations of the hunters, and his first sorrow at the loss of his parents had gradually lessened, he began to grow more lively, and did not so frequently stand lost in melancholy thought. He had discovered a great variety of pleasant plants—more than he had met anywhere in the old days—and daily he came upon still more.

The memories of those old days still troubled him sometimes. Then the gnawing and chewing of the restless jaws would suddenly cease, and the grubbing among the reeds or the digging under the fig-tree be stilled. He would march up and down aimlessly as if something incomprehensible were overpowering him and urging him forth. A soft squeak repeated now and then showed where his thoughts were. At such times, if he'd been alone, he'd have gone off ; but to forsake the little hippo and to enter the wilderness alone—that he

could not do. And so the thought of his comrade generally stilled his restlessness. Full of a peculiar feeling of home-sickness, the little pachyderm would sink his heavy head and return to his usual motionless and melancholy attitude until the hippo would attract his attention to something or other, or it would be time to begin their travels through the bush.

At night they were usually to be found in one or other of the grass-covered clearings, especially if the weather were fine. But in rainy weather their wanderings led them often to the edge of the plain. There a kind of grass was to be found which did not grow beside the pans, but of which the hippo was very fond—so fond that the rhino, who had not yet forgotten his experience with the lions, sometimes found it difficult to prevent him from venturing his silly head too far.

Of course they met other rhinos and hippos almost daily ; but as to attach themselves to one or other of these would mean a separation, they never stayed for long in their company.

The two friends had acquired a kind of respect for the bush-hog. He was a most useful sentinel—that the rhino soon discovered. And since he had been browsing on the grass every day, they had not had to run away for nothing so often, for the bush-hog was an old boy—learned in the law of the forest. He knew the meaning of every little sound. Blessed with more intelligence than the pachyderms, he could, by listening attentively for a moment, generally determine what kind of creature was moving in the undergrowth. And as long as he remained, the

rhino had found out there was no danger. This had given him a feeling of security, and reduced the suspense in which every creature lives as long as he is in the bush.

While leading this quiet and steady life in a world which seemed no longer so full of foes, there suddenly came a change in the destiny of our rhino calf. Their sentinel, poor fellow, was also not infallible, and it was just his presence which led to a step that was almost fatal to the little rhino.

Late one afternoon, dirty with earth and dried mud, he came with his usual ambling gait from the fig-tree, where he had been rolling for a long time and had fallen asleep. Looking up anxiously over the reeds for his comrade he stood still, alarmed—the pan had disappeared! During the fine weather all the floating islands of grass in the pan were driven by the wind against its northern edge, and lay for quite a mile in a dense mass against the bank, and as they stood from six to ten feet high, no one would have believed but that they were growing like that out of the ground. While he had been asleep, however, the wind had veered and blown the grass towards his side. With the change in the wind the days of sunshine came to an end too. But what did it matter to him if it did threaten rain from every side? The pan he thought he knew so well was gone! And worse still, the hippo was not to be seen, despite his repeated calls. The grass stretched away endlessly before him, and from where he stood no water was to be seen.

All at once, while he was still puzzled for an explanation of the incomprehensible change, he



began to squeak excitedly. He heard something pushing through the grass, and soon after his friend appeared covered with grass and water weeds.

That night, when a soft drizzle settled down on the forest and the rustle of hostile steps could not be heard, there suddenly arose from the couch-grass a penetrating scream of terror. It was followed by a short struggle in which the snort of the bush-hog and the abrupt, savage roar of a leopard could be distinguished. For but one moment the excruciating noises re-echoed through the night, then all was over. The poor hog had performed his last service for the two comrades. Only the monotonous lullaby of the leaves continued on every side.

Lions ! was the first thought that came to the rhino. And the hippo, who was beside him ready to enter the bush, was possessed of but one other—that the danger lay between him and the water. Even before the leopard had uttered his last victorious growl ere beginning to lap the hot blood of his victim, the undergrowth crackled beyond the fig-tree where two alarmed animals were dashing off.

Next morning the fig-tree had a new proprietor. High above the rhino's bed, upon the wide crook of a bough, were the remains of the poor bush-hog, safely hidden for the next meal. The reason he had so often sought the company of the rhinoceros calf was no longer a secret. For many weeks he had felt that he was being pursued, and he knew his cunning and deadly enemy ! Once, indeed, they did meet, but the hog had had time to throw his back against a tree, and his dangerous tusks discouraged the leopard for that day. He had grown

old in the forest, but the inevitable tragedy had to happen—sooner or later—as in the life of every wild animal.

Whither the two had fled they did not themselves know—for when you have turned your back to the foe it always seems as if he were at your heels—but it was far out of the habitual way. When it grew light next morning they were in a patch of rugged veld near to the plain. To return to their fig-tree was unthinkable. But a new lair had to be found, and the little rhino, just visible against a bare, grassy hillock, gazed suspiciously about him as the first rays of the sun began to shine pallidly through the rain clouds upon the soaked landscape.

But his cautiousness came too late. On a high kopje the two hunters had been sitting even before dawn, watching with spy-glasses, knowing that big game is often at that hour to be seen in the grasslands skirting the forest. With a shock of joy they realised that the rhino calf, who had escaped them so repeatedly, was approaching them of its own accord.

But one had to take care! He was a strong chap, as had already been proved at their first encounter, and must be firmly tackled. All their Kafirs were spread out stealthily to encircle the hillock. This would be easy in the deep hollows full of high grass.

Doubtless all would have gone well, but the little flat-head who hitherto had been of no use in time of danger, was to-day, without knowing it, to repay the rhino for his services that day at the pans. Who would have guessed that he was standing on the other side of that hillock? Cer-

tainly least of all the knot of Kafirs, who had to prepare the ambush on that side before the hunters could appear in the open coming down-wind, and allow the rhino to scent them. So that when they almost stumbled upon him in the undergrowth and he sprang suddenly away with a snort, the Kafirs could only imagine it was the rhino cow, and a scene of the wildest confusion followed. On all sides rang out the cry : " Faro ! Faro ! " <sup>1</sup> and black flying figures rushed away through the grass and bushes, leaving shreds of cloth fluttering on the brambles here and there.

To make things worse, the rhino, seeing himself surrounded by enemies, rushed snorting to attack the nearest Kafir who separated him from the fleeing hippo. He carried a gun, but stood petrified with fear, not knowing what to do, then let fly at the rhino, who, half stunned, swerved aside ere he continued his onward rush. The bullet had made a deep gash in his shoulder, and here and there the grass on his spoor was dyed red. But he was free ! free ! With this one thought he stormed through the dense grass behind the hippo, straight for the nearest yellow thorns, where they both arrived utterly breathless.

They spent an uneasy day in the shrubs between the pans. The stinging pain of his wound prevented the rhino from forgetting for a moment the danger they had escaped, and his comrade, after the alarming encounter, was too restless to feed. Repeated shots, echoing in every direction, aggravated their feeling of insecurity and left the

<sup>1</sup> Faro = rhinoceros.

rhino with but one thought—to flee away as far as possible. Thus it was that a glimpse of the forest, which he could see through an opening in the yellow thorns high up there on the dark volcano, aroused in the persecuted little wanderer a desire for the old home in the extinct crater. Many a time, indeed, he had in his melancholy moods a feeling of home-sickness, and now that it had become so unsafe here, and he knew of no other spot, the recollection of his birthplace brought suddenly the thought that it was the safest refuge.

According to his habit, when he came to some sudden resolve and it was necessary to call his friend out of the water, he blew the alarm cry. But the hippo was quite near. He preferred to-day to follow close on the tracks of the rhino. He had grown so used to the leadership of his more experienced companion that he now followed him without any hesitation. What the little knobby head had in mind he did not know, but he himself had no plans to-day. If only they could get away from all danger, he would be content.

They had a long way to climb, and the little leader saw it was necessary to forge ahead and not dawdle to feed on the way. When the sun rose, and if his companion desired water, he would perhaps urge a return to the pans. That the little flat-head could be very obstinate on this point the rhino had already discovered. Over there in the crater there was water enough—that he knew. And as the big rains had begun in earnest, more fell almost every day.

Before nightfall our two strangely ill-matched

comrades disappeared into the darkness of the forest to seek a new home. The curtain of foliage shut from them the pans and the open veld, to which they would not soon return.

The clouds, which at sunset had been banked against the horizon and seemed to promise fine weather, had again quite covered the sky, and soon it was pitch-dark. Upon another night he would not have minded, but to-night in his capacity of pilot the rhino found it very troublesome. As it became increasingly difficult to continue through the undergrowth, he followed previously made rhino-paths. After a wearisome hour they struck a broader trail, which the rhino joyfully recognised as one he had often travelled, and which led by the shortest route to the crater.

On their long journey through the dark forest they heard only the noise of the rain and wind in the leaves, the cries of night-apes and owls, and now and then the snorting alarm cry of a rhino. From the far-off flats the dull roaring of lions was to be heard from time to time, but as they climbed up higher the sounds grew fainter. Thicker and higher became the gigantic tree-stems: the vault of foliage more impenetrable to the light. But this had its advantage. The troublesome undergrowth grew less dense, and finally disappeared. Here grew only that which could lift its crown up to the sunlight.

Soon the hippo began to wonder where they could be going. So far as this they had never strayed. It was ever uphill and he was growing tired. But his leader left him little time for reflection. The

little rhino began to acquire a certain air of dignity and self-confidence, and pushed his way through the bushes that now and then barred the path, as if he had been used to doing so all his life.

The deep hollow was the scene of strange doings that morning. The sun had just shot above the crater's edge and was greeted by the uproarious shouts and screams of colobus and other monkeys. A troop of baboons joined in the concert, clamouring as if war were afoot.

Yet it was merely the glad reaction after the many rainy days. Soon dozens of lories began to caw, and finally a crowd of hornbills sent their insane screams reverberating through the air.

All this surprised the hippo as from the edge of the crater he looked down upon the forest scene, now turning into manifold shades of green under the brightening sunlight.

Where in the world had his friend brought him ? The little leader was already descending. He seemed to be particularly serious. Perhaps he felt his responsibility as pilot. He knows that all danger is not yet past. He must first be sure that there were no elephants. That the giants are no friends of the rhinoceros, experience had taught him.

It did not take long to descend, for the path was broadly trodden by the elephants, who recently had passed on their way to the marshes on the eastern side of the volcano. At the first drinking-pool at the foot of the ridge he sniffed inquiringly at the spoors and dung, and noticed with satisfaction that they were not so fresh as to signify immediate danger. Fresh spoors showed him at the same time



that a rhino had been drinking and rolling here that morning. That was reassuring. Apparently the elephants were not in the crater.

The hippo, who had no experience of elephants, was already in the water, snorting to his heart's content. After his examination the rhino had no objection to join him in splashing about a little. But he soon left off and began to browse. On the grass surrounding the water it was warm and pleasant. So evidently thought a gigantic python who lay stretched out upon the green, warming himself in the sun, that threw a metallic copper-coloured sheen over his mottled skin.

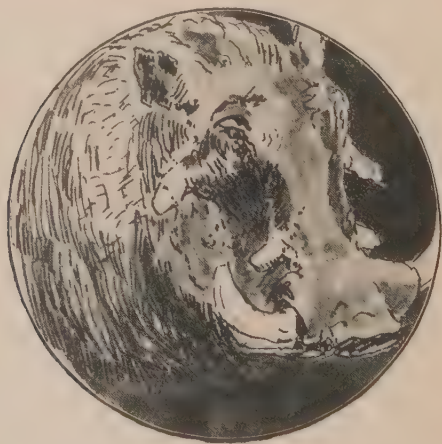
Very soon the rhino returned to the elephant dung, which he turned up and strewed about with his hind feet, after which he again sniffed at it carefully. With his snout in the air he pulled absurd faces, sniffed at the wind, and began all over again. At last he came to a decision. After squinting at the spluttering of the hippo as if he were considering whether it would be worth while to ask his opinion, he forged ahead along the hollows full of grass, stretching far between the bushes. In the furrows, where the water was deeper, the hippo followed, extremely satisfied with his new bathing-place.

It must have rained tremendously of late. Everywhere lay pools of water, brown from the sap of decaying leaves and the mud of the deep volcanic soil. A tangle of green tendrils hung from the trees like curtains round the clearings, and between the dark tree-stems the moss trailed to the ground in long, pale green streamers.

The rhino, ploughing along the edge of the

hollows, could scarcely be seen under the tender green plants and rank grass enfolding him. And of his companion, only the broad shiny back was visible as he struggled through the water-weeds. Before them fled strange water fowl with black, fluffy bodies and red legs, piping as they hid under the tufts of spear-grass.

It gave the rhino a sad kind of pleasure to visit all the old well-known spots. When towards evening the rain began slowly to settle down upon the forest, they were standing at the other end of the dark crater close to the great papyrus marshes. For many weeks its black border of bushes, which in the dusk rose darkly against the sky, would be the boundary of their little world.



## CHAPTER IV



THE brooding silence of midday lay upon the crater. The dark crowns of the gigantic trees on its steep and lofty sides stood motionless, etched against a bright blue sky. Over the couch-grass and the papyrus, which presented a brown, downy surface, the midday heat danced and flickered. It was that time of year when the pools dried up and breezes seldom stirred the slumbering plants by day.

An unobservant traveller would hardly have noticed the motionless form of a young rhinoceros bull in the shadow of the bushes at the edge of the grass, where he had been standing for some time. From there he could look across the grass to the papyrus, whence now and then loud crackling sounds were audible. The heat and weariness of the day irresistibly affected the sleepy animal. Lower and lower sank his heavy head, and his eyes became mere slits. Now and then an ear flickered to drive off a troublesome fly.

A hippo, smothered in mud and bits of grass, came out of the papyrus and approached the rhino with a shuffling tread over the sward. After they had rubbed noses the hippo turned aside and went to lie in the shade under a bush. We know them both. Five years have passed since we saw them, as two little fugitives, enter the crater. The friendship which had arisen during those dark days and had increased with time, so that they imagined it must always have been, had never been broken in all those years. Even the attraction of other rhinos and hippos with whom they came almost daily in contact could not separate them. Sometimes the rhino had had moments of anguish when the hippo stayed too long in the water with others of his kind. But never did his comrade neglect to appear at sunset at their rendezvous.

Sometimes elephants had disturbed them and necessitated their departure. But the elephants did not remain long in the crater—they were too restless for that. They were also visited regularly by a great herd of buffaloes, who were wandering about the neighbourhood of the mountain and spent a day or two in the couch-grass. Between the buffaloes and themselves there was no feud, however. A new friendship had been formed with a stump-horned rhinoceros bull, who had made himself at home in the crater for years. At first the gruff old misanthrope would have nothing to do with them, for when such an old bull has an aversion from the company of his kind, he becomes savage and seldom joins other creatures.

Gradually, however, he began to seek their society, and each time that they returned after a long absence he received them with an air of sulky kindliness.

Of course the two had not remained there uninterruptedly. Each year as the days grew longer and warmer and all the water, with the exception of a little in the papyrus morass, dried up, they left for the pans. Other and still more wonderful spots on the mountain were visited and new pools even were discovered. But in the rainy season they always returned.

What had they not lived through in all that time ! Once he had been a small, inexperienced rhino. Now he was provided with a dangerous weapon on his nose, and his dread of lions had long since disappeared. It was now the dry season, and where he was standing there had once been water. There on the grass his parents used to stroll, and here close by was the very bush beside which he lay the day before the disaster. Was he thinking of all this as he stood there deep in meditation, staring at the ground ?

All at once he shook his head and listened. His sharp ears had heard the shrill trumpeting of an elephant up on the slopes. The sound came from the east, and the animal—or animals—should be half-way behind the ridge. But no—there it was again ! Soon loud cracking was heard. It was plain that a whole troop of them was already making the descent. It was not a great distance from where the rhino stood to the eastern ridge, and presently, in a bright green open space on the slopes, the grey shapes of the giants became visible. White

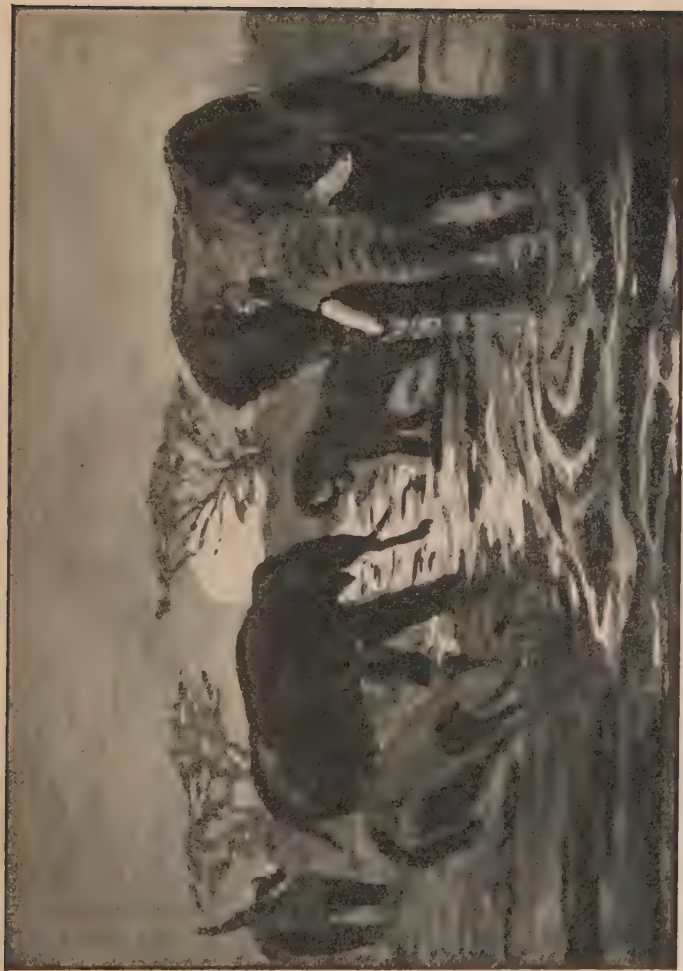
tusks, uplifted trunks, flapping ears—all were easily distinguished.

Our friend realised it was time to leave. The hippo, who had been lying nearly fast asleep, also heard the clamour and stood up. A trip to the pans would not be at all unpleasant, he opined. It was high time they left—he had just come to this decision after having had to be satisfied with a mud bath. Quickly they took the well-known path westward.

Of all the fresh places they visited there was one at which they much preferred to sojourn—a small pool at the border of the plain, where during the night many animals foregathered. All game in the neighbourhood came there to drink, and rhinos and hippos from the neighbouring bush and pans visited the luxuriant grass-veld surrounding it. To reach this place they struck a faint track as soon as they got to the top of the crater's edge. This path would take longer than the one to the old pans straight down below them—but they were not exactly anxious to leave the forest before nightfall. In the plain they had, ever since their youthful experiences, always been rather cautious. Once they came for a moment to a circular grassy clearing in the middle of the forest, whence they had a view of huge sun-scorched flats far below, and the blue summits of mountains faintly glimmering in the dim distance.

Half-way down they came to a dry slood, where, as a rule, they had found a pool of water in which to slake their thirst. The drought this year had been so great that, to their surprise, they found the pool





Elephants in the crater-swamp.



quite empty. The bottom was still damp, however, and as they were very thirsty the rhino proceeded along the slood. Nor was it very easy to do so, for it soon got narrower and steeper, and here and there it was most difficult to get over the loose stones and driftwood. However, they scented water nearby, so on they went.

What was that? On a steep bank right in front of them, where presumably the slood terminated, they plainly heard the heavy tread of some huge creature. From the rumbling of its stomach they supposed it to be an elephant, but they could see nothing. The rhino took a few cautious steps and stuck his head through the bushes into the sunshine of a small clearing. Before him yawned a sudden abyss, and as in alarm he took a step backwards, he perceived a great elephant descending the opposite bank. While for an instant the two stood there undecidedly—for the banks on either side of the slood were steep and the return journey difficult—the soft ground began suddenly to slide away under the enormous weight of the elephant. The unfortunate creature had also smelt the water in the abyss, formed doubtless in the dim past by some volcanic eruption, and as he had often descended steeper places than this one he did not bother about the uncertainty of the foothold. While steadily gliding down in a sitting position and when hardly ten yards away from the edge of the precipice, he suddenly saw the dark, funnel-shaped hole before him! A piercing cry of alarm rent the air. With all his might the poor animal kicked and struggled to stop his career. These efforts served but to

hasten his doom, for at every fresh attempt the ground gave way more and more under the weight and force of his forefeet. As a last resort, when already at the edge of the precipice, he turned his body round in an attempt to curl his trunk round a tree-stem ; but the crust of earth on which the hind legs rested broke off, and with excruciating screams the unfortunate creature fell into the abyss. With a horrible thud he lay upon his back after a fall of about sixty feet in a narrow fissure, half-dead and pinned down helplessly. His backbone shattered, he made feeble attempts to rise, uttering time after time heart-rending cries for help. But here in this world-forgotten wilderness his cries died away without the possibility of their being heard.

The only two witnesses of this tragedy looked on, dumb and astounded, then terrified by those penetrating shrieks, which they understood only too well, they turned away to retrace their steps. The pitiful sounds grew fainter. After a while only the suffocating rattle in the dying animal's throat was to be heard. Soon the fallen leaves and loose soil will hide the remains from the eye of man and beast—if, indeed, within a hundred years' time another should chance to arrive at this inaccessible corner of the wilderness.

It was only after they had left the sloot and were again on the well-known path that our two friends somewhat regained their composure and began to tear off twigs to chew on the way. The dying cries of the elephant and his tragic end made so deep an impression on them that at first they came down the water-course noiselessly and almost stealthily,

as if they feared that some tangible enemy in some way or other had had a hand in the disaster.

When the hippo, after a while, kept on heading to the left instead of taking the usual direction, the rhino understood that he wished to reach the nearest pan, and he saw no reason why they should wait until they arrived at the other one late that night. He, too, was very thirsty, and docilely followed the hippo's lead. Towards sunset, when they came to the big trees and the little clearings covered with ragged scrub, they knew that the forest proper had been left behind and that they would soon be at the first pan.

The light of evening gilded the little kopjes and hillocks in the veld around the pool, and threw a deep glow over the dark wall of giant trees at the edge of the forest. As the distant plains this year were particularly dry, all the game had come to seek grazing grounds nearer the mountain so as to be able to drink at the pool. An unusual bustle was afoot that night. Rows of dark wildebeest came up out of the veld, and everywhere stood troops of hartebeest, zebras, gemsbok, and other game who had quenched their thirst or were cautiously gazing and watching before daring to approach the water.

Huge flocks of ducks, geese, and herons, who during the day had their abode here, took flight to their sleeping-places near other pans and marshes with a great deal of noise. No sooner had they left than a cloud of flamingoes came sweeping up, described a great arch round the pool, and settled down upon the water with a mighty rustling—"swish—swish—swish." At its deepest the water is

but knee-deep, and as the veld round about is open and the grass short, it makes just the right kind of sleeping-place for the flamingoes, who prefer to pass the night in the waters of a pan not surrounded by shrubs, being afraid of the sudden attack of one or other of the beasts of prey. There they will stand all night long on one leg, dozing comfortably in the shallow water.

Other flocks continually followed the first, and after a few minutes they spread over the pan in a solid white mass of at least half a million birds. Whenever any creature frightened them their wings were spread wide, exhibiting a magnificent variety of rose and crimson colouring, which vied with the glory of the sunset clouds floating in the west. The noise got louder every minute, and every fresh flock was greeted with deafening cries—"kronk—kronk—kronk"—from the assembled thousands.

Soon the moon rose above Kilimanjaro and shed a magical glow over the bustling scene. Most of the animals had drunk their fill and the flamingoes had more or less gone to rest when our two friends at last emerged from the bush, coming, slowly browsing, towards the pan. Last night they had got no farther than the first pools, where they spent the night in the company of other hippos. The day was also passed there. While the hippo was enjoying himself in the water with his own kind, the rhino retired to a big tree, where he dreamed the noonday hours pleasantly away in a dark hollow overgrown with moss and ferns.

It pleased them, and to a great extent put them at their ease, to see so many wild creatures here.



As the game from the plains lessens towards eight o'clock, when most have quenched their thirst and left, the number of forest dwellers increases—rhinos, buffaloes, water-buck, bush-buck, and wild pigs—who all find it pleasant to mix with the busy life on the moonlit flats.

How differently the two now hearkened to the roaring of the lions ! The king of the plains would scarcely find a tempting prey in the thick-necked, ungainly young hippo—even if he had not been accompanied by so dangerous a comrade.

It was not to be wondered at that in so attractive a game-country half a dozen Wandórrobo<sup>1</sup> should have made their headquarters in the neighbourhood. Since sunrise one of them had been in a great yellow thorn near the pan, spying upon the game. It was unlucky for our two friends that they were on this particular day the last of the forest dwellers to return to their shelter. They were immediately discovered by the spy, who, after looking to make sure which way they were going, came down to lead his mates to a suitable place for an attack. These blacks, who live only by the chase and have no abiding places but caves or fallen trees, are armed with poisonous arrows and shining assegais. They are deadly weapons, and the Ndórrobo is, in contrast to other natives, rather brave and approaches near enough to a dangerous foe to ensure that his weapon shall not miss its mark.

So woe to you two, wandering so unconcernedly and slowly towards the bush, if the enemy come

<sup>1</sup> Ndórrobo = singular }  
Wandórrobo = plural } wandering native hunters.

near enough to attack and no friendly circumstance come to warn you !

The Wandórrobo crept in a stooping position to a hillock, whence they saw the rhino and hippo passing at a distance of sixty yards. The forest lay a few hundred yards farther away. Before the two could reach it they would have to cross a stretch of scrub in which grew isolated trees. Here the Wandórrobo intended to seize their opportunity. They would not risk things in the open veld, for there they would have to rely on their arrows, which at this distance might miss. Besides, it was dangerous on account of the presence of the rhino—so indifferent to their own safety the blacks were not.

As soon as they were certain which of the paths the two would take, they went quickly up-wind and circumvented the innocent travellers. A large mahogany-tree stood where the path ran through some ragged bush, and here the six Wandórrobo took up their position. In a moment one of them climbed into the tree and ascertained that the animals were still in the path and already quite close by. A crackling in the bushes confirmed this.

Experienced hunters, the Wandórrobo had chosen their point of attack judiciously. The light breeze blew from the direction of the two animals.

The rhino approached, walking past about three yards away from the tree. In front of him the path divided. For a moment he hesitated, then turned to the right and went quietly on. If only he had taken that to the left ! For then he would have got their scent.

The hippo, upon whom the attention of the natives was fixed, followed steadily twenty yards behind the rhino. He came with nodding head, sated and content, thinking only of a sunny day, a day of undisturbed pleasure in the water.

The head glided by—the leader of the blacks waited until his flank was exposed, then took a stride to the left from behind the tree, and in a flash drove his assegai, sharp as a lance, deep between the hippo's ribs. Another Ndórrobo at the same time jumped to the right and struck the defenceless creature from behind. The bushes being higher than his head, the poor hippo had not seen the black figures springing out upon him, and the noises he heard came too late to warn him.

Suddenly the earth thundered. A hoarse, bass sound was heard, and when the rhino looked round alarmed, he saw to his amazement the hippo coming along at a mad pace, storming past him. As he passed, the rhino became aware from the smell of the assegais—three of which were still sticking in the animal—that this was the work of man. Raging, he too fled, snorting threateningly, after the hippo.

His poor friend did not go far. In a patch of scrub, ere he reached the forest, his strength left him and he began to falter. In a despairing attempt to remain on his feet he ran round, tottering like an intoxicated creature, then he fell, and after a few struggles lay quite still.

With savage blowing and snorting the rhino rushed from side to side, now here, now there, sweeping through the scrub in every direction to get at the invisible foe. Repeatedly he returned

to the hippo to squeak and sniff and rub against him. He recognised that he had indeed lost his old friend. Experience had taught him, too, when the life of an animal was at stake. Gradually, as nothing of the enemy was to be seen or heard, he grew quieter, and at last stood sadly beside the hippo, his nose to the ground.

The Wandórrobo had taken good care not to follow the two animals into the dangerous scrub. From the tree they saw, by the movements of the bushes, the whereabouts of the hippo's dead body. The rage of the rhino convinced them of the folly of going any nearer just yet. They had lots of time, and were content to wait until it grew safer.

Unaware of the relationship between the two creatures, they had no doubt that the rhino would soon go away. So when they saw how he rushed to the attack at every suspicious sound, they withdrew to their cave with the intention of returning later in the day.

As at ten o'clock it grew terribly hot, the rhino pushed his head under the bushes, growing thickly together there, and went to lie in their shade. For a while he struggled against his desire to sleep, but the silence continued. A few rhinoceros-birds settled on the hippo, and he fell gradually into a restless slumber. He had taken care to rest down-wind so that he could immediately scent any enemy coming to the hippo, for he could not easily forget his old comrade, and hoped still to be able to avenge him.

The noonday heat flickered and danced over the flats. The neighbourhood of the pans seemed utterly forsaken, and only a keen eye could detect

the scattered game in the distance. All was at rest. It could hardly be later than three o'clock.

Yet something was moving! Some black figures with shining assegais passed to the left of the pans and made straight for the mahogany-tree. Thence they followed the path along which the rhino and the hippo had disappeared, to another tree about thirty yards from the spot where the hippo should be lying.

As a precaution, one of them climbed the tree to spy. He saw the hippo among the trampled bushes, but as nothing of the rhino was to be seen, he came to the conclusion that the dangerous animal had left. So they began to talk loudly on their way, for they knew from previous experience that this would tempt the rhino, if still in the neighbourhood, to speedy action, in which case they would still be near enough to their tree.

But wild creatures do not always behave as is expected of them. The rhino heard the approaching noises well enough where he lay under the bushes, but instead of attacking immediately, he jumped up with great elasticity and awaited his foes without a sound. He knew very well that they were coming—hence his attitude, so full of menace. The path which the natives had to take on account of the dense scrub ran only a few yards from the rhino.

Hardly had the two foremost Wandórrobo passed the bush under which the rhino stood, when the earth trembled and, with the suddenness of a tropical storm, he burst upon them, lifted the hindmost native upon his horn and tossed him high up into the air. Without interrupting his onrush he pinned

the other to the ground. With almost incredible fury he trampled upon him with his forefeet, threw him up into the air with his horn, and was on to him again as soon as he reached the ground. Then he stood away for a bit, only to attack him anew. In a few moments there was nothing left of the poor wretch but a bloody and shapeless mass.

A rhino has but one thought at a time. While busy wreaking vengeance on the one Ndórrobo, he quite forgot the other. Of him indeed there was nothing to be seen or heard, for this victim had landed in the branches of a medlar-tree, where he was still hanging in an unconscious state. At the first snort of the attack the other four blacks, who were a little behind, had disappeared from the scene.

After a few minutes a little cloud of smoke arose at the edge of the scrub. At first slight and hardly visible against the sky, it soon grew to a dark column which unfurled before the wind, covering everything. The dry grass standing high between the bushes caught fire, and the flames spread in the direction of the forest. The four fugitives had set it alight.

Their expectations that now the rhino would be compelled to flee were not disappointed. He stood beside the dead hippo irresolutely for a moment, then seeing with consternation this strange apparition approaching so menacingly, he ran off snorting and disappeared into the forest.

This gave the black hunters the opportunity to attend to their mates. One was still alive. After they had sewn together, with threads made of sinews, the wound through which the intestines were visible



the man came gradually to himself, and it seemed that this time he would get off with merely a warning.

The whole day the rhino wandered aimlessly around the pans. Towards sunset he was browsing again in one of his favourite haunts on a grassy hill rising up from among some ragged bushes.

From there he saw, as soon as it grew dark, the red glow and columns of smoke from an enormous fire in the forest. The whole world seemed to be alight. Even here the crackling of tambouki and of elephant-grass, of bulrushes and palmite, was audible. As it drew nearer and he could see the tongues of flame between the black clumps of trees, he fled farther off, away from the neighbourhood of the pools.

All night the fire raged. It at last reached the reed-beds between the pools, and when the calm morning broke, a dark, suffocating cloud of smoke, growing thicker every minute, lay for miles over the landscape.

But the rhino had trekked far away. These parts where he was born and where he had had so many experiences, he was to leave for ever. His goal was a dark mountain, rising afar off against the horizon, towards which led many well-trodden elephant paths.

The farther he got from the volcano, the scarcer did the game become. Here in the huge flats, where there is less rain than on the mountains, the drinking-places have dried up long ago, and the scene, at other times so crowded with game, lies forsaken under the burning midday sun. Grey kopjes and hillocks covered with scattered thorn-trees, and here and there a great isolated rock

seeming to have no connection with its surroundings, rising as it does like a monument from the barren plain—these are the only objects breaking the monotony of the vast expanse.

Far away in front of him lies the mountain, like an oasis, calling him to its green forests. So on and on he goes to meet the uncertain future!

Ever and again he gazes with longing at the dark, extinct volcano, gradually melting away in the misty atmosphere and its enveloping clouds of smoke.

Late in the afternoon the rhino passes the last game—a couple of ostriches. And as the setting sun throws its crimson glow over the veld, and the evening breeze sings its sad little song through the thin thorn-trees, the rhino goes on his lonely way, far over the deserted plain.

THE END



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